



**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**  
Ag Obair Còmhla Airson nan Eilean

# **ASN Home to School Travel Policy**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
June 2025



## **Introduction**

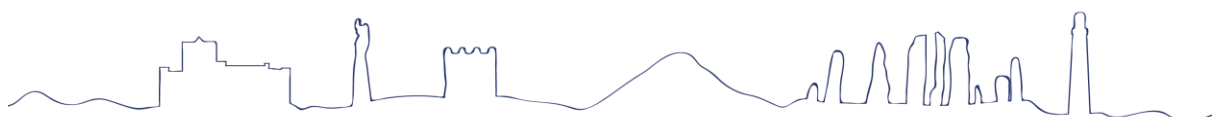
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to ensuring that all children and young people with additional support needs receive appropriate transport to enable them to access education safely and effectively. The provision of Additional Support Needs (ASN) home-to-school transport is a vital component of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's commitment to inclusion, accessibility and equity, ensuring that all children and young people can participate fully in education regardless of their additional needs.

## **Purpose**

This policy outlines the criteria, processes, and responsibilities for the provision of home-to-school transport for children or young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). It aligns with the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, which requires local authorities to identify and provide appropriate support for a child or young person with additional needs and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide free school transport where necessary.

## **Rationale**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recognises that some children or young people may have additional support needs that make it challenging for them to access travel arrangements designed for their peers. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar also recognises that, in these circumstances, assistance with transport from the local authority may be appropriate.



## Entitlement

There is no automatic entitlement to transport due solely to additional support needs. Most children and young people with additional support needs will attend their local catchment school (in line with government guidance on the Presumption of Mainstreaming) and, where there is entitlement to free Home to School transport due to distance, the first consideration should be for the child or young person to use existing education transport with their peers. Travel skills can be an important factor in developing a child's social skills and independence and this will be considered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in transport planning. However, for some children, the nature of their additional support needs will mean that this is not suitable, and that they should be assessed for access to ASN transport. Eligibility for ASN home-to-school transport is determined based on an individual assessment of the child's or young person's circumstances, considering their ability to travel independently, the distance from Home to School, and whether they are attending a specialist provision.

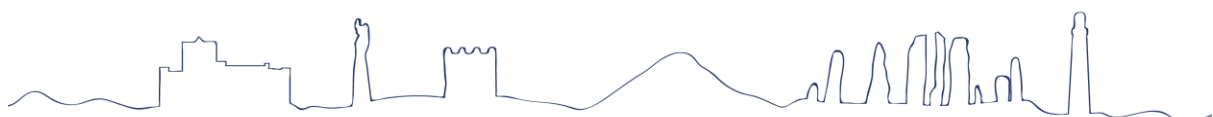
### **Child or young persons who may qualify for transport assistance include:**

- A Primary and Secondary child or young person who is ordinarily resident in the Western Isles and attends their designated catchment school, where their needs require transport support.
- A Primary and Secondary child or young person who is temporarily resident in the Western Isles for a period exceeding six weeks, attending their catchment school.
- Children and young people with ASN, up to their 19th birthday, who require special assistance with travel due to physical, sensory, cognitive, behavioural, or medical needs, whether attending their catchment school or an alternative educational setting approved by the Chief Officer of Education and Children's Services.

Where a child with additional support needs is not entitled to transport due to distance, parents/carers can enquire about a grace and favour non-entitled bus pass if this is assessed as being appropriate. Also, even if a child or young person does not meet the automatic entitlement criteria, there may be specific circumstances meaning ASN transport is the most fitting option for a child or young person with additional support needs. This will be granted based on personalised assessments by the ASN Transport Group.

During the assessment process, consideration will also be given to the child or young person's safety from the point of getting onto transport until the official start of the school day in each setting. This will be factored into any decisions on whether existing school transport is suitable, as there will not normally be provision in place for a child or young person to have supervised individual support from school staff before the school day starts.

Where a child or young person with additional support needs attends a school other than their catchment school, without the Chief Officer for Education and Children's Service's specific agreement, it will be the responsibility of the parents/carers to ensure the child's safe arrival at school.



## **Responsibilities of Parents/Carers**

Parents and carers play a crucial role in managing their child's transport arrangements. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to providing appropriate support where necessary and parents/carers are also expected to:

- Ensure their child is ready for collection at least five minutes before the scheduled pick-up time.
- Escort their child from their home to the vehicle.
- Ensure their child is appropriately dressed for travel, considering weather conditions.
- Work with transport staff and escorts by encouraging their child to follow safety rules and expected conduct.
- Be available (or arrange appropriate supervision) to receive their child promptly upon return home.
- Ensure their child is collected from the vehicle and taken to their home.
- Ensuring that their child travels safely to and from the pick-up location - where a designated pick-up point is assigned instead of home collection.
- Work alongside schools and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, in cases where a child exhibits distressed behaviour that could pose a safety risk during transport, to agree on appropriate interventions. This may involve:
  - Implementing additional support strategies.
  - Increasing supervision levels during transport.
  - Reviewing alternative transport arrangements where necessary.

Failure of parents/carers to engage with safety expectations may result in transport arrangements being reviewed or, in extreme cases, withdrawn.

## **Staff Responsibilities**

School staff responsible for supporting pupils at designated pick up and drop off points must ensure a safe, timely and well-communicated transition between school and transport. Having clear communication between school staff, escorts, drivers and families is needed to convey appropriate information, communicate delays or inform of any changes to routine.

School staff will be present to meet the vehicle at the agreed time to take over or hand over the care of the pupil and will support transport staff to ensure that any seatbelts and necessary safety equipment are properly secured prior to the vehicle leaving. The safe handling of pupil belongings, including school bags, mobility aids or medical equipment will be managed carefully, with any essential items clearly labelled.

Schools are also responsible for sharing relevant and up to date documentation with the transport provider, including medical protocols and pupil passports. This ensures that transport staff have accurate and current information to meet the pupil's needs appropriately and safely.



## Inclement Weather

Where the weather conditions on the day are deemed to be unsafe it is the decision of the operator/vehicle driver whether to undertake any journey. Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar does not determine centrally if routes should or shouldn't operate and the risk assessment responsibility lies with the driver/operator, as they are responsible for the safety of the vehicle and its passengers. If the driver deems the conditions to be unsafe, then that assessment is respected by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Conditions can be variable across the island and the health and safety of our staff, contractors, and the pupils we transport is paramount.

If a parent/guardian decides to make transport arrangements on a day that transport has been cancelled, then the expectation is that they will make their own arrangement to collect their child at the end of the school day. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar cannot guarantee that conditions will be favourable at the end of the day for transport.

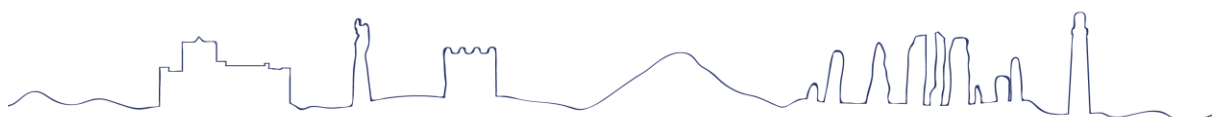
## Transport Assessment

Decisions on the provision of assistance with transport for a child or young person with additional support needs will be made by the Education and Children's Services Department. Relevant professionals or Headteachers will apply for ASN transport on behalf of the parents/carers using the appropriate online form. This will detail the individual circumstances which evidence the request for additional support with transport from home to school and home again.

Any decision will be based on the evidence presented in the application form and supporting evidence collated by the Team Around the Child (TAtC). Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Assessment of Needs Matrix Evaluation Tool (Appendix A) will be used to support decision making and ensure equity of provision across the authority. During the process, there is also the use of risk assessments to assess the safety of all parties.

The information required to complete the assessment is gathered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and allows for a personalised, individual assessment. The information gathered **may** include, but is not exclusive to:

- An IEP.
- A Child's Plan.
- Medical evidence provided by doctors, occupational therapists, or other healthcare professionals, detailing any conditions that impact the child or young person's ability to travel.
- Reports from the school/social work/other agencies, explaining how ASN affect the child or young person's ability to use standard school transport.
- Environmental factors, including:
  - *The safety of walking routes between home and school.*
  - *The availability and suitability of contracted bus transport.*
  - *The impact of adverse weather conditions on safe travel.*



- Risk assessments, ensuring that transport solutions prioritise safety for the child or young person and other passengers.
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Assessment of Needs Matrix Evaluation Tool, which ensures equity and consistency in decision-making.

The following questions might be considered when assessing a travel plan:

- Is the child or young person able to walk or cycle on their own?
- Would the child or young person be able to walk or cycle if given some support/lessons?
- Is the child or young person able to use school or public transport on their own?
- Would the child or young person be able to use school or public transport if given some support/training?

The transport assessment uses 6 key headings to look at specific needs:

- Mobility needs
- Medical needs
- Regulation Skills
- Vulnerability factors
- Practicality considerations
- Training required.

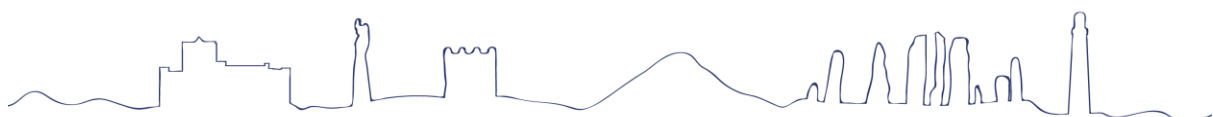
A continuing priority for the child or young person, is to have arrangements in place that can be adapted and can potentially provide a pathway back to existing Home to School transport with their peers when/if appropriate.

### **Modes of Transport**

Transport assistance is tailored to meet the individual needs of each child or young person. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar may provide:

- Mileage reimbursement for parents/carers transporting their child, at the current HMRC tax-free rate.
- Access to mainstream school bus services.
- An allocated escort (school staff or Comhairle nan Eilean Siar - appointed person) to accompany a child or young person on school or public transport.
- ASN-dedicated minibuses, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles.
- Taxi transport, with or without an escort, depending on the child or young person's needs.

The safest mode of transport will be determined based on risk assessments and the child or young person's level of need.



## **Parent/Carer Payments**

The authority may, in some circumstances, make payments to parents/carers to provide Home to School transport using their own vehicle. Payments may be made where the child or young person is otherwise eligible for assistance with travel but either:

- there are no existing travel arrangements which could accommodate the child or young person,
- the needs of the child or young person are of such complexity that transport provided by the parents/carers is the most appropriate travel solution.

The authority will require the school to certify the child or young person's attendance before paying any mileage allowance. The rate of payment per mile will be equivalent to the HMRC tax free limit – e.g. 45p per mile in 2025/26.

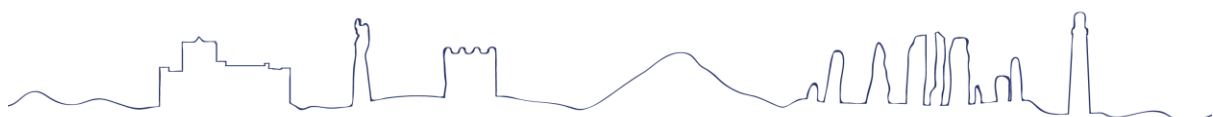
## **Review of Transport Arrangements**

An individual child or young person's transport requirements will be reviewed regularly, and at least annually, by the ASN Transport Team. This will be repeated in each case where there is a change in the placement, the circumstances or the needs of a child or young person, to assess whether the level of provision remains appropriate. A review period will also be stated in the risk assessment.

## **Residential Placements**

Where a child or young person with additional support needs is placed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in a residential placement (either within the Western Isles or on the UK mainland), travel to and from that school for the child or young person shall be provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar shall also, at its discretion, provide assistance with relevant travel by the parents/carers of the child or young person concerned, including travel to accompany the child or young person on journeys to and from the residential placement and travel to allow participation in child or young person-centred activities such as parents'/carers' evenings and case conferences. The Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services will be responsible for determining entitlement in all such cases.

Where a child or young person with additional support needs is placed in a residential school other than at the direction of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (e.g. where a parent makes individual arrangements for their child with a specific provider), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will not meet any consequential travel costs for the child or young person or their parent. Similarly, if a child or young person with additional support needs attends a school outside their catchment area on a placing request basis (placement not prescribed or supported by the Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will not meet any consequential travel costs for the child, young person or their parent.



## **Disability Living Allowance – Higher Rate Mobility Component**

The parents/carers of some children or young people may be in receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component (HRMC) of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA). This is the gateway to the Motability Scheme that supplies vehicles, adapted or un-adapted, in return for the DLA.

If a child or young person is the HRMC recipient and the family obtain a vehicle through the Motability Scheme, then the vehicle is expected to be used for the benefit of the child or young person. When deciding whether to provide travel assistance for the child or young person, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will take account of a Motability car, where this has been provided for the benefit of the child or young person. Similarly, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will take account of the HRMC of the DLA where this has been provided for a child but has not been used to obtain a vehicle.

## **Use of Travel Escorts**

Where Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has decided to provide travel assistance, it will also consider whether it is necessary to provide an escort to supervise the child or young person's journey. Decisions on the provision of escorts will be made by the ASN Transport Team, in consultation with the Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services, parents/carers and other relevant professionals. The decision will take account of:

- The age of the child or young person
- The method of transport
- The additional support needs of the child or young person
- The medical condition/s the child or young person may have
- The safety of all parties.

## **Changes to Arrangements**

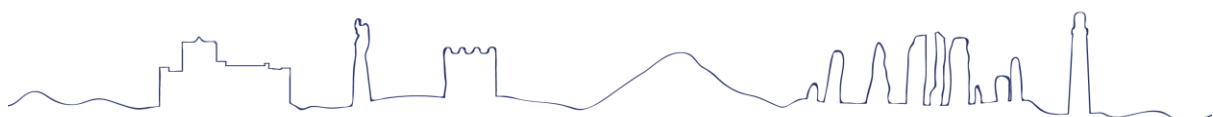
Where the authority decides to vary agreed transport arrangements, they will, except in exceptional circumstances, consult with parents/carers and other professionals on the matter and give parents/carers at least 14 days' notice of the change.

## **Travel During the School Day**

This policy covers Home to School transport at the beginning or end of the school day. There may be travel outside this, where a child or young person is required to take part in curriculum activities/trips or take part in an after-school activity. These should be considered separately by the Headteacher and responsible school staff who will also contact and discuss arrangements with parents/carers and appropriate staff in the Education and Children's Services Department.

## **Travel to Respite**

Transport to school will normally be provided to children who are placed in planned respite care within the Western Isles.





## **ASN Transport – Service Standards**

Specific Service standards for additional support needs transport provision are set out at Annex 1.

## **Appeals Process**

Parents/carers may appeal against all decisions not to award assistance for Home to School transport for a child or young person who attends their catchment school and may also appeal decisions not to award their preferred method of transport to and from their catchment school.

All such appeals will be considered by the Education, Sport and Children’s Services Committee Sub-Committee.

Appeals will normally be heard by the sub-committee within 28 days of the appeal being lodged unless:

- external advice needs to be sought by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- further information is required from the appellant
- a road safety assessment is necessary.

If external advice is sought by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the sub-committee will meet within 14 days of the receipt of this advice, if later than 28 days since the submission of the appeal. If further advice is sought from the appellant, the sub-committee will meet within 28 days of the receipt of this information.

The parents/carers and/or their representatives and, where appropriate, the child or young person, will be invited to attend the sub-committee if they wish to present their case in person or online. The sub-committee will also seek the views of officers of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and may seek the views of any other parties whose evidence would be material to the appeal.

## **Appeal Decision**

- In the event of an appeal being upheld, the sub-committee will specifically include a time limit against each award to indicate when they wish the case to be revisited.

## **Complaints and Dispute Resolution**

- Parents/carers and schools will have access to a designated point of contact within the Resources Team for concerns or complaints.
- Complaints will be acknowledged within three working days, with a full response provided within ten working days.
- If a complaint remains unresolved, an appeals process will be available.



## **Policy Review and Amendments**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar remains committed to ensuring fairness, accessibility, and sustainability in ASN home-to-school transport. By working in partnership with parents/carers, schools and transport providers, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar aims to promote safe, efficient, and inclusive transport solutions that support every child's right to education.

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with legal requirements and best practices. Updates will be made as necessary to reflect:

- Changes in legislation affecting ASN transport.
- Updates in transport infrastructure or availability.
- Developments in education policy and inclusion practices.

