



## HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY UPDATE

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

### PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval for updates to the Home to School Travel Policy which includes clarifying the priority order for bus pass allocation and incorporate the use of Under 22 NEC Travel Card.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Home to School Transport Policy update in 2019 was related to an Internal Audit review of the service, removal of the requirement to charge for spare places and other changes to comply with the recommendations of the Internal Audit review. The report in 2019 stated the policy would be updated in 2023 but this was not possible due to the cyberattack and associated recovery workstreams. The 2024 refresh is attached at Appendix 1 and focuses on updating the policy to be more specific on the entitlement and application process along with clarifying the criteria used to determine who can be issued a bus pass to enable them to travel on the Home to School Transport Bus Services.
- 2.2 The policy now removes the 'three strikes and you are out' situation introduced in the 2019 update and identifies the responsibility upon the Headteacher of each school to deal with pupil behaviour issues arising on buses as if they happened on the school campus. The policy also provides more detail in certain sections to assist officers in determining eligibility for transport. This policy update is for Home to School Transport only. The current situation is that the 2011 version of the Home to School Transport Policy Section 14 and the associated Annex 1, form the current Comhairle policy for ASN Transport. A further report will be submitted to the Comhairle in the next 6 months to update these documents and create a standalone Comhairle ASN Transport Policy.
- 2.3 Officers considered the option of providing a second bus pass where there were extenuating circumstances but found this to be too complex and potentially very costly to introduce into current bus contracts. This was also considered too complicated in terms of procurement for future school only bus services. The Department supports the applications for Under 22 NEC Travel Cards for all pupils who want to opt in. This now gives pupils the opportunity to travel as members of the public on integrated bus services and on all available public services.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle approve the Home to School Transport Policy at Appendix 1.**

Contact Officer: Iain G Smith

Appendix: Home to School Transport Policy

Background Papers: None

## IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Implications/None</b>
Financial	
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Implications/None</b>
Risk	Policy clarifies criteria to minimise risk and highlights annual refresh to ensure future bus contracts are flexible and linked to the annual changes in pupil population.
Equalities	
Corporate Strategy	<b>Support Children, Families and Young People</b> Raise ambition, skills and attainment, in particular to address inequalities
Environmental Impact	
Consultation	

## BACKGROUND

5.1 The Home to School Transport Policy update in 2019 was related to an Internal Audit review of the service, removal of charges and other changes to comply with the recommendations of the Internal Audit review. The report in 2019 stated the policy would be updated in 2023 but this was not possible due to the cyberattack and associated recovery workstreams. The 2024 refresh, detailed at Appendix 1, focuses on updating the policy to be more specific on the entitlement and application process and associated criteria used to determine who can be transported to and from school under this policy.

## DETAIL

- 6.1 The policy now removes the ‘three strikes and you are out’ situation introduced in the 2019 update and identifies the responsibility upon the Headteacher of each school to deal with pupil behaviour issues arising on buses as if they happened on the school campus. The policy also provides more detail in certain sections to assist officers in determining eligibility for transport. This policy update is for Home to School Transport only. The current situation is that the 2011 Home to School Transport Policy Section 14 and the associated Annex 1 form the current Comhairle policy for ASN Transport. A further report will be submitted to the Comhairle in the next 6 months to update these documents and create a standalone Comhairle ASN Transport Policy.
- 6.2 The policy also retains the right under law for the Comhairle to decide in the future to charge non-entitled pupils for spare places on dedicated Home to School Transport Bus Services, where to do so would not cause financial hardship. This policy also references the use of the new Under 22 NEC travel card on public services after school for those remaining in school or attending after school clubs as a replacement for after school activities passes.

- 6.3 The policy clarifies the address used to identify the location used to determine entitlement to a Home to School bus pass as the primary address of each pupil on the SEEMIS system. Section 10.1 of the policy clarifies the only situation where a second bus pass can be issued. This is where parents are subject to a residence order with linked contact order made by the court (either the Sheriff Court or Court of Session) stating with whom a child or children shall live.
- 6.4 As requested, officers considered the option of providing a second bus pass where there were extenuating circumstances but found this to be too complex and costly to introduce into our current bus contracts. This was also considered too complicated in terms of procurement for future school-only bus services. Making exceptions possible within the policy and delegating decision-making powers to officers was not a viable option and could overload the contracted school-only bus services.
- 6.5 The Department supports the applications for Under 22s travelcard for all pupils who want to opt in. This now gives pupils the opportunity to travel as members of the public on integrated bus services and on all available public services.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The updated Home to School Transport Policy includes revisions to certain sections which were previously ambiguous and clarifies for officers any uncertainty about entitlement for bus passes. The policy now determines the priority for the allocation of non-entitled bus passes on our School only bus services and allocated places on the Integrated School services. This is most relevant where there is excessive demand for places on a particular bus route. This policy also introduces the annual rollout of the School Transport Guidance to new P1 pupils when they enrol and the issuing of links to the online version to all parents by Group Call email when the guidance is updated.