

TRANSPORT POLICY FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Contents

1. Our Policy

2. General Principles

3. Review

4. Individual children

5. Parents Travel to Contact

6. Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements

7. Secure transport

1. Our Policy

- 1.1 Leicester City Council considers that children who are Looked After, should share the normal expectations and day to day experiences of all children. Part of this principle extends to children being able to expect that their full time carers will take them to school, leisure activities, contact, etc.
- 1.2 It is recognised that a child should remain in their school placement wherever possible for consistency of education, minimal disruption, and social aspects such as friendship groups.
- 1.3 It is however acknowledged that for those children who are looked after, there may be practical difficulties for their carers in transporting them to and from school, leisure activities, contact, etc.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 Children should travel as their peers do. Wherever possible children and young people who live close to their school should:
- Be walked to school by their carers; or a suitably mature person
 - Walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; or
 - Be transported by their carers
- 2.2 Care planning for individual children will require that school placements may need to be maintained whilst permanency is sought. Additionally children should not move school at certain key points in their education (e.g. GCSE years).
- 2.3 Children and young people who live further away from their school but live in the city should also travel in the same way as their peers where possible, using the means above or public transport.
- 2.4 Where a bus pass is deemed appropriate, these can be provided by Business support services, providing the authorisation has been granted by the relevant Team Manager. For each child it will be necessary to risk assess their ability to safely travel independently. These assessments will take account of

physical and emotional vulnerabilities, known risks of harm, including CSE and missing concerns. The assessment should also consider the need for an escort for taxi journeys. The assessment should be included in the overall care plan for each child, as well as the placement plan wherein authority is delegated.

- 2.5 It is likely that children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling will be anxious prior to the appointment and may exhibit varying degrees of distress following the session. Some children and young people may wish to disclose very sensitive matters, including possible abuse disclosures. Therefore, wherever possible, children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling should be transported by their carers.
- 2.6 Where this is not possible, the child's social worker, supervising social worker and the carers must consider other options, bearing in mind that there should be as much continuity as possible. This should be clearly communicated to the child and planned in such a way so that the child knows who will transport them to and from the appointment.
- 2.7 Transport arrangements must be discussed before the placement is provided and confirmed within the post placement meeting, where delegation of authority should be detailed. This includes who is authorised to cancel any transport arrangements, and under what circumstances.

Children placed in internal placements.

- 2.7 Internal foster carers can receive a mileage rate (34.9p per mile) for undertaking transportation in the following circumstances only;
- outside of the usual school catchment area
 - for therapeutic and non-local health appointments
 - for introductions when moving placements
 - for contact.
- 2.8 This needs to be agreed beforehand by the fostering manager in liaison with the child's social worker and supervising social workers where necessary. The

fostering allowance includes a contribution for day to day transport costs associated with looking after a child in care.

- 2.9 Residential homes are expected to use the resources provided to ensure that children and young people attend school/education provision, leisure activities, contact etc. The majority of young people in residential homes will be in the older age range and therefore able to use public transport. Risk assessments are required as for children placed in foster care; this will be retained in the home and be a part of the Placement Plan. Where the home's resources do not allow for a young person, who cannot travel on public transport, to be transported by residential staff, transport will need to be commissioned via Passenger Transport Services.

Children placed with external providers

- 2.10 There is an expectation where children are placed with an IFA or residential home, transport arrangements will be included in the commissioning contract of the placement provider. The need for transport should be part of the placement request form.

Requests for transport from the passenger and transport service

- 2.11 Where none of the options stated above are possible, and other informal arrangements cannot be identified it will be necessary to commission transport from the passenger and transport service. This will be dependent upon the supervising social worker confirming that the carers cannot provide transport because:

- It conflicts with the needs of other children living in the family; or
- The use of public transport would present risks which are not consistent with safeguarding vulnerable children, (e.g. multiple placements or additional needs of child/children).
- The foster carer was approved as a carer in employment and cannot reasonably be expected to undertake all transport arrangements.
- The foster carer has no transport available, and the journey cannot be reasonably undertaken on foot or by public transport. It would generally be

expected that journeys of up to 45 minutes each way are reasonable for carers and children.

- 2.12 The supervising social worker must ensure that all travel arrangements are clearly defined and agreed within the placement planning process and the post placement meeting. The child's social worker must then reflect this within the care plan and it will form part of the discussion within Looked After Child Reviews.
- 2.13 All transport requests to the passenger and transport service must be fully completed by the child's social worker and be agreed by the Service Manager prior to submitting the request.

Under no circumstances must a member of staff enter into arranging transport directly with a voluntary driver or taxi company.

3. Review

- 3.1 Commissioned transport for school must be provided on a 3 monthly/termly basis and reviewed towards the end of that period. This review will be undertaken by both the social worker, team manager and where relevant the supervising social worker. This ensures that transport is provided only where necessary.
- 3.2 Where it is assessed the need remains, the transport request will need to be re-submitted. This ensures ongoing transport arrangements do not remain in place longer than is necessary.
- 3.3 It is necessary to regularly question the need for such transport as circumstances do change. This is the purpose of the review.
- 3.4 The care plan will be reviewed in the Looked After Child review meetings and needs may change accordingly as a result.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the transferring team to ensure PATS are notified of the new cost centre. This will be included in the transfer checklist.

4. Individual children's needs

4.1 Babies and pre-school children

Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child to and from the contact venue.

4.2 If the foster carer is unable to transport a baby or a pre-school child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored.

4.3 If the supervising social worker (fostering) confirms that:

- The foster carer cannot transport the child to the contact venue and cannot act as an escort: and

4.4 The child's social worker confirms that:

- If contact is supervised, the contact supervisor cannot transport the child; and
- There is no safe and trusted family member(3) to offer transport; and
- There is no other staff member able to transport

Then a request for transport and escort must be submitted to the passenger and transport service with the authorisation of the team manager.

Children of primary school age

4.5 Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child to and from the contact venue.

4.6 If the foster carer is unable to transport a child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored. The use of an escort will need to be assessed depending upon the child's individual needs.

Older children and young people

4.7 The expectation for older children and young people is that following an assessment of contact arrangements within the planning and review process,

these arrangements are safe and meet the individual child's needs, giving due consideration to their expressed views. This may include public transport.

- 4.8 Some young people may require additional support to travel independently. This needs to be considered by the Social Worker, in conjunction with the carer and assessed and reflected in the care plan.
- 4.9 There are also 'Keep Safe' places that young people can access if they are travelling and become lost. These are run across the city and county. More information can be found at <http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-safety/find-a-keep-safe-place> (NB: This information needs to be promoted with both carers and children. We have asked the community safety team if we can have a stock of Safe Cards for LAC.)
- 4.10 When older children and young people are assessed as being unable to travel independently and all options have been explored then a request for transport, and escort if required, must be submitted to the passenger and transport service with the authorisation of the team manager.

5. Parents Travel to Contact

- 5.1 Parents can be assisted with travelling expenses to enable contact to go ahead. The social worker should submit a request for financial support to the relevant team manager, with clear reasons. Once the manager's approval has been given, the social worker should ask the team's administrative staff to arrange for the travel warrants/ bus tickets to be issued or for the payments to be made.

6. Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements

- 6.1 The passenger and transport service must be given as much notice of cancellations as possible in order to avoid unnecessary costs being incurred and drivers undertaking unnecessary journeys. These must be emailed to the service without delay.
- 6.2 The passenger and transport service **cannot** accept a permanent cancellation from a foster carer. This instruction must be submitted by the child's social worker on the relevant form.

- 6.3 Any minor changes to a transport arrangement such as change of time must be notified by the Social Worker or business support via e-mail. However, changes that have a financial implication can only be made with a new authorised request.
- 6.4 The passenger and transport service will not accept a request from a foster carer to alter the destination of a child's journey; any such request must be made via the social worker.

7. Secure Transport

Secure Transport/ supported transport is required in circumstances where a child/young person cannot be transported safely. It will be dependent upon a risk assessment being completed. The assessment will conclude that there is a high risk of harm for the child/young person or the driver and that the provision of secure transport is required. This will need the authorisation of those with parental responsibility, the parents if the child is placed with consent (subject to S20 The Children Act 1989) and the Local Authority if placed on an Interim Care Order or Care Order (subject to Section 38 and Section 31 The Children Act 1989). This will require a letter of authorisation, signed by the Service Manager in order for the commissioned provider to assist the child/young person to use the transport.

- 7.1 Secure transport is commissioned by the placements desk. Where the transport is required for a new placement this should be identified in the referral for the placement. For any other arrangements, the placement desk should be contacted by phone for the arrangements to be discussed.