

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure
DATE	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2014
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	School Transport Pick Up and Drop Off Procedure
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/14/063
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	Yes

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to advise members on the current School Transport pick up and drop off procedure for pupils at rural home locations and to seek approval for a revised policy to be implemented whereby pick up and drop off will be on public maintained roads/areas only. The report also clarifies the pick up and drop off procedures for all other School Transport.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Agree to implement the revised school transport pick up and drop off procedure for pupils residing at rural locations.
- (ii) Ratify the pick up and drop off procedure for all other School Transport.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no perceived financial implications arising from this report. However if alterations are recommended following Road Safety assessment to allow for safe pick up/drop off at certain locations these will require further consideration following the usual procedures in terms of Road Safety and Traffic Management.

### 4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The provision of school transport is a statutory requirement under Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended. All duties must be undertaken with consideration given to the terms of the act, as detailed later in the document.

4.2 There may be Health and Safety concerns for certain pick up/drop off points and accordingly it is proposed that safety assessments will be undertaken where these are considered necessary.

### 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

#### 5.1 Statutory Requirements

5.1.1 Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, requires Education Authorities to make such arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children and as such for the provision of school transport and transport facilities, under such terms and conditions as may be arranged, and to pay all or part of the reasonable travelling expenses for school pupils residing in their area and attending designated schools.

5.1.2 The Education Authority is further required, when considering whether to make arrangements for the provision of school transport for pupils attending their designated schools, to have regard to the safety of those pupils. The statutory maximum walking distance is two miles for children less than 8 years old and three miles for children aged 8 or over from a child's designated school. The distance from the school is measured as the nearest available route. Pupils who live outwith these statutory maximum distances to their designated school are then eligible for Local Authority facilitation to access their school. Authorities must consider the safety of walking routes to school for pupils living within statutory walking distances from their designated school. If the routes could be considered unsafe, then transport should be provided, even when distances may fall short of eligibility criteria.

5.1.3 Aberdeen City Council, like many other Local Authorities, has implemented a policy utilising the statutory requirements detailed above. However rather than separate children at aged 8, for simplification the walking distances are determined for Primary aged children and Secondary aged children, whereby the statutory maximum walking distance is implemented as two miles for Primary aged children

and three miles for Secondary aged children from a child's designated school.

5.1.4 The statutory requirement to make travel arrangements does not imply a door to door service and requires only that suitable arrangements are made. However, arrangements that anticipate a child being expected to walk an unreasonably long distance to meet transport are unlikely to be determined suitable. The safety of a pupil's journey between home and the pick up/drop off point is considered to include being accompanied by a responsible adult if necessary.

5.1.5 This report seeks to address and formalise the transport pick up and drop off procedure for pupils living in rural locations with no safe walking route to school as well as pupils outside the statutory walking distance.

## **5.2 Current Arrangements – Rural Properties**

5.2.1 The majority of Aberdeen City Council's school transport is contracted to external transport providers. The service providers are provided with the details of the pupils to be transported and their addresses.

5.2.2 Historically, for rural properties within the City, depending on the size of vehicle, Service Providers have either picked up/dropped off on the public road or accessed private roads to reach service users' houses to pick up/drop off. The latter is mainly when the vehicle is designed to carry 8 or fewer passengers. This has resulted in an irregular arrangement whereby some pupils are being picked up/dropped off at road ends while other pupils are picked up/dropped off at their houses. This report seeks to implement a standard procedure whereby all pupils are picked up/dropped off at a point on publicly maintained roads.

5.2.3 A number of safety issues have been recognised with the current procedure. Private roads are not subject to regular maintenance and, in particular, winter clearing/gritting. Damage to Service Provider's vehicles has been reported due to the poor condition of some private roads. When Service Providers have complained about road conditions, inspections have highlighted the roads to be pot-holed and only accessible at very low speeds.

5.2.4 When advised of poor road conditions repairs are sometimes carried out by the home owner/resident. These tend to be of a temporary nature and the problem recurs. Poor or non-existent lighting on roads and around properties can make manoeuvring difficult.

5.2.5 Aberdeen City Council could be responsible for repairing and/or compensating for damage caused to private property by vehicles contracted to provide school transport.

### **5.3. Proposed Arrangements – Rural Properties**

- 5.3.1 To address these issues it is proposed, where pick ups and drop offs are required at rural properties, to make it at a suitable publicly maintained point. This will usually be the point at which the private road at the pupil's address joins the public road. This is a standard practice adopted by a number of other Local Authorities across the UK.
- 5.3.2 This is also the standard procedure within Aberdeen City Council for pupils being picked up/dropped off by larger vehicles (school buses). However, these pick up/drop off points rarely benefit from the safety infrastructure that dedicated bus stops often have and as such, it is proposed that a risk assessment will be carried out at each of these points by a member of the Public Transport Unit initially. If safety issues are highlighted a further assessment will be carried out by a member of Aberdeen City Council's Road Safety Team. If the Road Safety Team's assessment considers a pick up/drop off point to be unsafe then the Public Transport Unit will liaise to agree an alternative or a remedy to make the point safe.
- 5.3.3 It should be noted that the travel between home and the pick up/drop off point is the responsibility of the parent/guardian and, as stated previously, the pupil's journey between home and the pick up/drop off point is considered to be accompanied by a responsible adult if necessary.
- 5.3.4 There is no suggestion that pupils stand on public roads waiting for school transport to arrive. They will be advised to stand about 10 metres from the junction and wait until the school transport vehicle has pulled in and stopped and the driver indicated to the pupil to approach the vehicle.
- 5.3.5 In the case of primary school aged children it will be the normal procedure, where possible, for the vehicle to pick up and drop off on the side of the road their house is sited. Additionally, where safety issues dictate, this will also apply to secondary pupils.
- 5.3.6 This proposed change is not applicable to school transport in place for pupils with additional support needs (ASN). These will be dealt with separately on a case by case basis.

### **5.4 Current Arrangements – City Mainstream and ASN Transport**

- 5.4.1 For pupils in mainstream education, living in non-rural locations, free school transport is provided where a child is enrolled in his/her designated primary school and lives two miles or more from that school, and where a child is enrolled at his/her designated secondary school and lives three or more miles from that school.
- 5.4.2 Free transport may be provided in various ways, either by the provision of season tickets on buses or by direct provision of contracted transport

by the Public Transport Unit. In certain isolated and exceptional circumstances financial payments may be made directly to parents to transport their own children, but again, this is restricted to areas where other more normal methods of transport provision are unsuitable.

- 5.4.3 Again, there is no implication that there will be door to door transport provided. In certain instances, children may be required to walk up to two or three miles as appropriate, although usually the distance is much shorter. In these circumstances pick up/drop off is usually at a designated bus stop. This is the normal practice for pupils travelling to/from school in large school buses.
- 5.4.4 Where smaller vehicles (taxis and/or minibuses) are used it is the normal practice that pupils are picked up/dropped off from the pavement or roadside at or near their home address.
- 5.4.5 For pupils with Additional Support Needs free transport is provided no matter what distance he/she lives from his/her designated school. Pupils are picked up/dropped off at or near their home. Pupils will exit the vehicle at the pavement side and, unless unavoidable, pupils will not have to cross the road to get to their home.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

If approved, these revised standardised procedures are planned to be implemented at the start of the new school year on Tuesday 19 August 2014.

## **6. IMPACT**

- 6.1 A key aim of the Community Plan is to ensure that all citizens have access to a range of transport options that reflect differing needs of age, gender, disability and income. The Single Outcome Agreement also sets a priority of improved public transport and integration of transport is a key to improving access to employment, education and training opportunities.
- 6.2 The Smarter City document sets out that we will provide and promote a sustainable transport system.
- 6.3 The Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure service plan sets out to deliver our statutory responsibilities effectively and efficiently. In addition the Planning and Sustainable Development Service Plan sets out that we will have an effective and efficient Public Transport Unit. It is a priority of the Council's Five Year Business Plan that Aberdeen has a fully integrated transport network.
- 6.4 This report may be of interest to the public in terms of a statutory service delivery.

6.5 An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has not been completed.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

The proposed pick up and drop off points for rural properties as noted rarely benefit from the safety infrastructure that dedicated bus stops often have and as such, it is proposed that a risk assessment will be carried out at each of these points by a member of the Public Transport Unit initially. If safety issues are highlighted a further assessment will be carried out by a member of Aberdeen City Council's Road Safety Team. Any concerns with regards to safety will be addressed accordingly.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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