

HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education Services

1.0 Introduction and Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report sets out home to school travel and transport arrangements that comply with social distancing requirements including increasing transport capacity across the Greater Manchester area. The report also provides information on the support provided to schools and settings to ensure school transport runs efficiently.
- 1.2 At the beginning of the autumn term 2020, all pupils were expected to return to schools. Schools undertook rigorous risk assessments and the associated operational guidance to make sure the learning environment was COVID secure. Schools are constantly updating their operational guidance to meet their contexts.
- 1.3 Home to school travel and transport arrangements for the autumn term had to take into account the COVID 19 situation. Capacity on public transport is limited because of the requirements of social distancing. Guidance was issued by central government in August 2020. The guidance advised local authorities to increase capacity in public bus network and existing home to school transport arrangements.
- 1.4 The application of social distancing measures has reduced capacity on public buses. At a national level, at least 50% of the journeys to school are 2 miles or less and are by public bus.
- 1.5 Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has been promoting switching the mode of travel to walking and cycling in order to make capacity for those with longer journeys.
- 1.6 Schools across Stockport have put arrangements in place with staggered school start and finish times of the school day. This reduces the pressure on transport as well as protecting the integrity of the year group bubbles. Staggered starts and finish times are fully operational across Stockport. This has been managed without any loss to the overall teaching time.

2.0 Government Funding for School Transport

- 2.1 The government announced new funding in August 2020 to support local authorities to help create extra capacity in the autumn term as all children and young people returned to full time education. In total £40 million was allocated nationally. The Greater Manchester Area was allocated £2.2 million.

2.2 The funding will be available as long as social distancing arrangements remain in place. The situation will be kept under review. Locally, arrangements are in place for Stockport to have engage with TfGM to identify where additional capacity is required.

3.0 **Home to School Travel and Transport**

3.1 In order to make sure the additional government funding allocated to TfGM is appropriately targeted for Stockport's needs, communication has been sent to all schools asking them to provide feedback on the following main areas:

- Cycling and walking – are there any local conditions which might make it harder for pupils or staff to walk to school? Are there any issues with secure cycle parking which can be addressed to encourage more pupils or staff to cycle?
- Road safety – are there any concerns at drop off time relating to road safety if more pupils are arriving at school by car?
- Buses – are there any issues with school bus provision or public buses which pupils or staff are using to get into school?

3.2 Schools and settings have been provided with key contacts for reporting any issues relating to:

- Road safety or traffic management
- Cycling and walking
- School buses

3.3 The Transport Strategy Team will log all issues and record the actions taken to resolve identified problems. The work of this team is overseen by the Core Officer Group comprising of:

Head of Highways and Transportation

Transport Strategy Manager

Interim Director of Education

Head of Business Support

Principal Lead Integrated Services

School Representative/s

4.0 **Update from TfGM**

4.1 There are now 288 dedicated school trips to duplicates commercial trips across the GM area. In addition, there 12 buses on standby all day 7 for the morning only to act as floating resource that can be deployed at short notice to address any issues. However, out of the 288 trips, 113 had fewer than 10 users but not all schools were back to full capacity. TfGM will monitor the data and identify those services that are underutilised.

- 4.2 TfGM has advised that pupils should be sitting with others from their school bubbles only. Pupils are encouraged to wear face masks, but the anecdotal evidence is that adherence to this is very low. TfGM will run additional communications and similar exercise will be conducted locally using social media.
- 4.3 Schools have been asked to plan for moving to a 2-tier rotating timetable if this might be required in the future. This also applies to year group bubbles that have to self- isolate. Planning and provision of school transport should be adjusted accordingly. The Transport Oversight Group will investigate how these arrangements will impact on school transport and make recommendations to TfGM.
- 4.4 Feedback from TfGM indicated that Stockport has co ordinated approach which includes good communication with parents, schools and settings.
- 5.0 **Financial Implications**
- 5.1 Central government has allocated £2.2 million to TfGM to increase school transport capacity in order to comply with social distancing requirements.
- 6.0 Legal implications
- 6.1 This is covered under Section 508A of the Education Act 1996 in which local authorities must continue to discharge their duties in respect of sustainable travel and transport. The Coronavirus Act 2020 will be applied as determined by the local context.

Recommendations

Scrutiny is asked to consider and comment on home to school travel and transport arrangements for the autumn term.

Background Papers:

Travel, safety and coronavirus packs for Key Stages 1 - 4
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