

# Essex County Council Home to School Transport: Planning for September 2020

## Background

Educational settings in Essex will reopen in September and welcome back all children following closures caused by Covid-19. Essex County Council (ECC) is required to provide all [eligible pupils in Essex](#) with 'Home to School' (H2S) transport to a school or an educational setting (mainstream schools, special schools, and alternative education settings).

The [Department for Education \(DfE\) guidance](#) has set a new framework for supporting transport to and from schools from the autumn term 2020. The framework makes a distinction between dedicated school transport (covering Essex's Mainstream and [Special Educational Needs](#) settings) and the wider public transport, both used to transport eligible pupils to and from school:

- **Dedicated school transport** services are used only to carry pupils to school. This includes statutory home to school transport, but may also include some existing or new commercial travel routes, where they carry school pupils only.
- **Public transport** is a commercial service route, which can also be used by the general public.

## Dedicated School Transport

The DfE guidance framework for dedicated school transport says that as these services do not mix with the general public and tend to be consistent, the requirement for social distancing on these journeys will **not** apply from the Autumn term. However, educational settings and transport operators should consider;

- Distancing within vehicles wherever possible, and how pupils are grouped together on transport. Where possible, this should reflect the bubbles that are adopted within school.
- Organised queuing and boarding where possible, and the use of hand sanitiser upon boarding and/or disembarking vehicles.
- Reasonable additional cleaning of vehicles.
- The mandatory use of face coverings for children over the age of 11 ([exceptions apply](#)).

## Public Transport Services

Across Essex pupils normally make extensive use of the wider public transport systems especially [public buses](#). The DfE guidance framework for public transport says they expect public transport **will** continue Social Distancing in the Autumn term. Therefore, its use by pupils particularly in peak times, should be kept to an absolute minimum. To facilitate the return of all pupils to school, it will be necessary to take steps to both depress the demand for public transport and to increase capacity within the system. This will need to happen at a national and local level.

## Schools

ECC recognises that schools have a critical role to play in supporting collaboration between all parties - providers, local authorities, parents and pupils. ECC have worked with education settings to ask that they encourage parents, staff and pupils to walk or cycle to school if possible. Schools may want to consider using 'walking buses' (a supervised group of children being walked to, or from, school), or working with their local authority to promote safe [cycling routes](#). It is also recognised that for some families, driving pupils to an education setting will also be an option.

## Parents, Guardians and Students

There is a three phased approach to getting information out to this audience;

- 1) Parents and guardians of eligible pupils in Essex received a letter in mid-August detailing Home to School transport arrangements for September 2020. Included with this letter was some brief practical guidance aimed specifically at the students. Example copies of both are included below for your reference below:



Transport  
Allocation Letters - /



Transport  
Allocation Letter Att

- 2) In addition to the [standard H2S guidance](#), a brand new '[Getting to School](#)' information page has been launched on ECC's Stop.Swap.GO! website. Resources continue to be developed to support travel choices to educational settings, providing parents and guardians advice on the sustainable travel choices available to them.

The intention is for the Stop.Swap.GO! website to become the central source of information for Parents, Guardian and Students; therefore we will continue to direct people to this channel first wherever possible.

- 3) ECC has also made Home to School Transport advice/information available via the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pages](#) on ECC's Essex.gov.uk website and will continue to make use of all existing social media and local community engagement channels to disseminate information further.

## Further information

- In the first instance, it is recommend that ECC's [Stop.Swap.GO! website](#) is checked to view the latest updates.
- It is also recommended that the local transport provider's website/social media is checked (or they are contacted) regarding the latest changes/issues eg. a vehicle may have been delayed due to unplanned roadworks.
- If people cannot find the information they require elsewhere, they can contact Essex County Council's Contact Centre: 0345 603 2200\*.

*\*This number may be impacted during response/recovery from COVID19. Latest Contact Centre information can be found [here](#).*