

Letter to: All Shropshire School Transport Operators

Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
Shrewsbury  
Shropshire SY2 6ND

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Transport Operator,

### **Coronavirus (Covid-19) – Journey to and from School wef September 2020**

As you know, all Shropshire school children are returning to school from September 2020 and our school transport network is being fully re-activated.

In preparation for this, I wanted to write to you to reassure you that the Council has prepared a plan for safe transport.

Advice about public and contracted transport to school can be found on the Council's website at the following link:

[www.shropshire.gov.uk/school-transport](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/school-transport)

This advice is based on the latest Government guidance, and where needs be it has been adapted to reflect local circumstances in Shropshire.

The key messages for operators re school transport and Coronavirus (Covid-19) are:

- Please follow Government, Council and School advice for safe travel
- No one should travel if feeling unwell or if they or anyone in their household have any Covid-19 symptoms
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) is understood to be easy to kill on surfaces - normal cleaning products will do this. Operators should ensure that all touch points on school transport vehicles have been cleaned to protect against Coronavirus (Covid-19)
- From September 2020 there will be no social distancing on dedicated contract (closed) school buses and taxis, which means that vehicles will operate at 100% capacity
- Operators should provide good vehicle ventilation when carrying passengers
- Please work with schools to implement the seating plan for pupils - the default seating arrangement on contracted school buses will mean that each pupil uses the same seat each day and that they are grouped in their Year Groups ('bubbles'), with the eldest pupils seated at the rear of the bus and progressively younger Year Groups sitting towards the front of the bus. We've also asked schools to support operators with this
- We have asked parents to avoid using public transport buses, particularly if they live less than two miles from school: Covid-19 capacity regulations mean that public buses are likely to be full; where possible pupils should cycle or walk instead
- On some rural public bus services, the Council has provided additional buses ('Shadow' buses) just for school children; also, some operators are making other

public buses 'Schools Only' to increase seating capacities (*NB details are on the Council's website at the link above*)

- Where we can, we've arranged that pupils on contracted buses from different schools don't travel together

*And for the journey,*

- Parents have been asked that pupils wash or alcohol gel hands before and after travel, and as often as possible throughout the day; we'd like operators to provide on-bus alcohol gel; parents can supply gel as well if they wish
- For pupils aged over 11 face coverings are mandatory on public transport and should be worn on school contracted buses – pupils should not be refused travel if they don't wear a face covering
- We have advised parents that during the journey, pupils should face forwards, not touch others, not move out of their seat and avoid loud talking, shouting or singing
- Also, Government advice is that everyone should cover their mouth and nose with a tissue or the inside of the elbow when coughing or sneezing
- Problems or Covid-19 safety risks should be reported to the school and Council as soon as possible
- Drivers are expected to advise on the rules, but not police them
- And finally, please read the Council's full Covid-19 safe transport plan at the web link shown above; also, you might want to include a link from your web site to this Council web page for parents and others

We should also add that our plan has specific guidance for SEND travel and that the Temporary Seats Payment Scheme is not operating during the emergency.

Your continued support in the Covid-19 emergency is greatly appreciated and we thank you very much for this.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

**By working together, we can make Shropshire safe.**

Yours faithfully,

Shropshire Council

Passenger transport Group

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