



From mountain to sea

The Safe Transport of Children and Young People

Guidance for Parents and Carers

January 2024



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Date	Version	Reason for update
2013	1.0	Original document
June 2017	2.0	Update and refresh
Jan 2018	2.1	Update and check with other versions of guidance
Feb 2018	2.2	Collation of schools and escorts versions
March 2018	2.3	Advice from PTU (ASN) added
April 2018	2.4	Check with updated Children's Escort job profile
August 2018	2.5	Further checks
August 2022	2.6	Update regarding Transport to Special Schools, training of escorts and reference to Principal Educational Psychologist// Service Manager Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing
January 2024	2.7	Training of Escorts and requirements for the use of Bucklesafe and harnesses updated

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Introduction

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to offering an excellent service to pupils, their parents/ carers, schools and contractors. The following information is intended to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those involved in the movement of pupils between home and school on organised transport.

Parameters for the Application for Free Transport for Pupils

The Council provides free transport to all children who live over two miles walking distance from school in the case of primary school children, and three miles for secondary school pupils, as long as they are in zone for the current school. These parameters also apply to pupils who attend Special Schools.

Free school transport may be provided for children with additional support needs at the discretion of the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) or the Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager Inclusion Equity and Wellbeing and relates directly to pupil needs. An application for Transport should only be made on the basis of assessed need regardless of whether or not the pupil lives within the school catchment area. School transport routes are determined by the pick-up locations required for pupils who are entitled to free school transport.

Free transport can be provided in a number of different ways:

- Some children will be given season tickets to use on public buses.
- Some children will be reimbursed for the purchase of season tickets to be used on train services.
- Other children will be transported on buses / taxis operated by or contracted in by Aberdeenshire Council.
- In some circumstances payments will be made to parents to transport their children to school (see Parental Reimbursements).

The Council does not guarantee "door to door" transport. The child may have to walk to a safe pick up/ drop off point nearby.

Head teachers may use their discretion to apply to the QIO (school) or Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager Inclusion Equity and Wellbeing for free transport to pupils with additional support needs in the following instances (when pupils live within the normal catchment distances):

- The pupil is non-ambulant (wheelchair or buggy user)

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- The pupil has medical reasons for requiring transport which would make walking to school very difficult or likely to exacerbate their condition.
- A pupil has a severe form of Autism Spectrum disorder and cannot manage to walk to school due to traffic noise / other sensory issues.

This list is not exhaustive and consideration will be given on an individual basis.

Concerns

Should a parent /carer have a concern about the travel arrangements then this should be discussed with the school, in the first instance. In the case of out of authority placements, please contact the Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing, or their representative.

Duties and Responsibilities

General Guidelines and Procedures

Escorts should

- Sit amongst the pupils in order to exercise reasonable care and control. There may be situations when this is not appropriate but will be detailed in the relevant risk assessment.
- Carry contact details for the Passenger Transport Team, School and parents/ carers of each pupil. Contact numbers for parents/ carers will be provided ([Appendix 3](#)). This information should be either handed to the Escort, or in the case of Out of Authority Escorts, collected from Woodhill House or posted out.
- Should wear a council identity badge when on duty.
- Not take their own children on the transport (unless they are escorting their own child and with permission).
- Should be aware of data protection and not send a text or email from a personal phone/email address containing any information that can identify a pupil. This also applies to social media. Staff should refer to Aberdeenshire's Social media: Guidelines for employees and elected members.
- Parents/Carers are not permitted to travel on the transport, unless acting as the escort.

Escorts on Authority Transport

An escort's duty is to accompany a child who has additional support needs, to travel to and from school and other settings, on and off transport as required, provide adequate supervision and ensure that a high degree of health and safety is maintained at all times.

Escorts should

- Be uplifted by the vehicle and will board before collection of the first pupil.
- Greet each pupil and ensure they are securely seated with the seat-belt/ harness fastened before transport moves.

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- Ensure the safety, security, dignity and comfort of all pupils being carried in the vehicle, demonstrating sensitivity when communicating with pupils.
- Ensure the vehicle has stopped completely for pupils to board safely at each appointed pick-up point.
- Assist pupils to board or leave the vehicle safely with their bags / equipment. Some pupils may require an assisted transfer e.g. a transfer of pupils from seat to wheelchair or vice versa. Escorts may only do this when they have undertaken a moving and handling training course. No moving and handling of pupils is to be undertaken by an escort without prior training by Aberdeenshire Council.
- Ensure that the children leave the vehicle safely at their destination with their belongings and are handed over to an appropriate adult.
- Must not leave the vehicle until all pupils have been discharged. If required, assistance should be sought from school staff to accompany pupils into the school building.
- Should ensure good conduct from all pupils so that the driver is not distracted.

Please note

- It is the driver's responsibility for securing a wheelchair inside a vehicle with appropriate restraints.
- Food or drinks must not be offered to pupils, as this might be contrary to dietary requirements, unless authorised by parent / school for medical reasons.
- In the event of the driver being distracted or a pupil becoming ill or displaying challenging behaviour the driver should pull in at the first appropriate, safe place. A period of cooling down may be necessary. (Please refer to Health & Safety for further details).

Escorts on Public Transport

An escort's duty in this instance is to accompany a child who has additional support needs, on and off public transport, providing adequate care and supervision and ensuring that a high degree of health and safety is maintained at all times.

Escorts in this instance should:

- Board the public transport with the pupil.
- Ensure each pupil is securely seated before transport moves.
- Ensure that pupils board or leave the vehicle safely with their bags/ equipment at the correct stop.
- Ensure good conduct from pupils whilst travelling.

Please note

Food or drinks must not be offered to pupils, as this might be contrary to dietary requirements, unless authorised by parent / school for medical reasons.

Escorts Walking to School (& other settings) with Pupils

An escort may be employed in this instance to encourage independence. An escort's duty in these instances is to accompany a child who has additional support needs to walk safely, providing adequate care and supervision and ensuring that a high degree of health and safety is maintained at all times.

Escorts in this instance should

- Meet and greet the pupil at the door to their home, or meet pupil inside the front entrance to their school.
- Walk next to the pupil, on their outside (traffic side), ensuring their safety when crossing roads.
- Ensure pupils awareness and compliance with road safety for pedestrians (walking on the pavement, using recognised crossing points when available, stranger danger etc.).
- Discharge the pupil into the care of a responsible adult at the door (home / school) or in the playground as appropriate.
- Ensure good conduct from all pupils whilst walking to school or home.

A travel risk assessment should be completed prior to the journey taking place and reviewed as necessary.

Please note

No food or drinks must be offered to pupils, as this might be contrary to dietary requirements.

General Guidelines and Procedures

Parents and Carers

- It the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that the escort / driver is given a current copy of contact telephone numbers ([Appendix 1](#)). An emergency contact must also be provided, this should be a member of your family or friend who lives nearby and would be able to provide cover in exceptional circumstances. This information should be discussed in the first instance with the school and disseminated by the school. For Out of Authority schools; this should be discussed with the Principal Educational Psychologist/ Service Manager Inclusion Equity or Wellbeing, or their representative- Education Support Officer.

Useful information may include how to divert your child's attention if s/he becomes anxious in order to prevent further distress or alarm to other children (Appendix 1). This information needs to be provided to relief escorts as well as the usual escort for the child. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for a travel risk assessment to be completed.

- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child boards the vehicle safely.
- Parents/ Carers are responsible for informing their child's school, and escort if they will not be using transport due to illness or an appointment. If there are any concerns/ information to be communicated about the journey to school then the escort will advise the school. The school will then contact the parent/carer.
- Escorts may be asked to deliver items such as letters to school or to a parent / carer. Items must be clearly marked with the child's name, and the name of the person to whom they are to be delivered. Escorts may be advised by parent/carer that a child has a small amount of money in his/her bag e.g. for snack/fund raising activity. Escorts may be told by the Parent / Carer or school staff there is medication in a pupil's school bag they must pass this information on to the receiving and relevant adult.

Pick up and Drop off Points

- Parents/Carers will be given a time for collection and drop off for your child by the transport operator. It is your responsibility to contact the operator to ascertain this time. A letter will be sent to you by the Passenger Transport Unit advising who the transport provider will be or, in cases where notice times are short a member of staff from the school or establishment your child is attending will pass this information to you.
- Escorts stay on-board the vehicle at collection and drop off points (other than in exceptional and agreed circumstances). It is the Parents' / Carer's responsibility to see the child onto and off the transport. Escorts do not enter the pupil's home.
- It is your responsibility to meet the vehicle on time in the morning and at the end of the school day. The vehicle is only permitted to wait for up to a maximum of ten minutes past the agreed collection time. Drivers are only obliged to wait a few minutes if an adult is not available to meet their child.
- No pupil should be discharged from a vehicle or permitted to leave at an unauthorised stop.

If there is not an appropriate adult available to receive the pupil at their drop off point, then the pupil must remain on the vehicle for the remainder of the journey, and the school contacted. If an appropriate

adult is not available by the end of the school run, the driver and escort must deliver the child into the care of police at the nearest manned police station, or for out of authority placements, return to school with the pupil.

Changes to Transport Arrangements

- A Contractor may notify you of a temporary change of time for collection or return of your child due to road works, adverse weather etc.
- The school or Education Support Officer or administrator will notify you of any temporary changes but any permanent ones will be issued by the Passenger Transport Unit.
- Delays due to escort absence may be unavoidable whilst a replacement is found; for pupils who have a designated escort the driver is not permitted to uplift pupils without an escort.
- Parent/carers are responsible for informing your child's school if transport is not required on a specified date / time due to illness / hospital appointments etc.
- For out-of-authority placements Parents/Carers should contact the Transport Operator and Escort who can inform the Administrator. If a parent of a pupil attending an out-of-authority placement is aware that there will be a reduction in the need for an escort (reduced hours or termination of transport) they are responsible for notifying the Principal Educational Psychologist/ Service Manager Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing or the Education Support Officer at least 1 month in advance.
- Escorts **may be** entitled to redeployment or redundancy, and unnecessary costs incurred by the Authority may be passed on to parents who give insufficient notice

Health and Safety

Children and young people are required to behave in a safe manner at all times aboard the vehicle.

- Children and young people must remain seated with their seat belt fastened at all times whilst the vehicle is moving, and when stopped to permit other children to alight or disembark. Children and young people must only remove their seat belt when instructed to do so by the escort, unless a buckle safe is fitted, in which case the escort will remove the seatbelt. A buckle safe can be requested, in the cases of very young children or 'flight risks'. This is requested through the school/ ASN Transport, or the Education Support Officer. Parental consent must be sought before this is used and this can be evidenced in a minute of a meeting. Use of Bucklesafe must be recorded in the Child's Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment/ Transport Risk Assessment. Any child using Bucklesafe must have an escort to support the release of the device.
- When a pupil is unsettled during the school day and demonstrating inappropriate behaviours that may escalate, it is the school's responsibility to decide whether or not to permit the pupil to travel on transport. If the pupil is unsettled and demonstrating inappropriate behaviour prior to the morning pick up from home, while it is the responsibility of parents to decide whether or not to permit the pupil to travel on transport; the escort may make the decision that it is not safe for the transport to go ahead. In these circumstances, the escort should advise the Parent/Carer and then contact the school or Education Support Officer to advise. It is recognised that this will only occur in exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher or Education Support Officer will then contact Parent/Carer. The safety of all children and their escorts / drivers is paramount.
- In exceptional circumstances, when a decision is taken to prevent a child from travelling on the child's designated transport, the school must inform the Parent / Carer and the child will remain supervised on school premises until collected.
- In the event of the driver being distracted or a pupil becoming ill or displaying challenging behaviour the escort must ask the driver to pull in at the first appropriate safe place. The Parents/ Carers and school should be contacted, or Education Support Officer for out-of-authority placements. For out of authority placements, this should be included in the risk assessment; in general terms; the procedure would be:
 - Contact school
 - Parent/carers (this could depend on time of day e.g., start of school day/going home)
 - Education Support Officer

All accidents or incidents involving escorts or pupils must be reported to / and recorded by the School (including physical injuries such as bites, scratches, damage to property etc.). Incident forms must be readily available in all schools. For out-of-authority placements, incidents and accidents must be reported to the Principal Educational Psychologist/ Service Manager Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing via the Education Support Officer. Any incident will be reported to the Parent/ Carer.

Partnership Working

It is important for Transport, school and family to work together to ensure safe, stress free travel. This includes helping your child to follow the safety procedures. It may, on occasion, be necessary to suspend transport, due to health and safety concerns, until a resolution can be found. As a last resort, if a satisfactory resolution cannot be found, it will become your responsibility to transport your child to and from school.

Medical

In the case of a medical concern, the escort should advise the driver to stop the vehicle safely, and the escort will take appropriate action e.g. contact the school or parent/carer.

- In the event of a medical emergency (unless alternative emergency arrangements have been recommended by specialist NHS Grampian staff) the driver/ escort should phone 999 -then contact the school for further notifications to be made.
- Should it be assessed in collaboration with specialist NHS Grampian staff that medical intervention is likely to be required to support the pupil, appropriate training will be given to the escort.

Adverse Weather Conditions

In the event of severe weather conditions:

- The parent / carer should phone the school weather line/consult Aberdeenshire Council website (or head teacher for out-of-authority placements) to check if the building will be opened and staffed for pupils on that day. Information is usually posted on the school website.
- Contractors notify schools, who will display information on their websites / Aberdeenshire council website. The information may be broadcast on local radio stations and on the Council Facebook and Twitter sites. For out-of-authority placements the contractor may notify the parent directly.
- Parents / carers have the responsibility for making a decision regarding their child's attendance at school if the weather is severe.
- Consideration must to be given to possible deterioration in weather conditions during the day, and whether you can collect your child if necessary. If you transport your child to school when school transport is not available in the morning, you must also collect the child at the end of that school day (or earlier in the event of school closure).

Changes to Journeys

Journeys may be changed due to the following:

- Additional children joining the vehicle or leaving the route for that vehicle.
- Moving escorts to other journeys due to meeting children's needs or the creation of more efficient routing for transport.
- Absence of an escort due to illness.
- Any changes to journeys for pupils in placements out-with the Authority (e.g. Linn Moor, Camphill or Orchard Brae Schools) are referred to the Principal Educational Psychologist/ Service Manager Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing via the Education Support Officer for agreement.

(This list is not exhaustive)

If there are transport changes then it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is suitably prepared for the next journey. A social story may assist some children to understand and accept the changes (please speak to your child's school for details of how to produce this).

Accident, Breakdown or Failure of Transport to Arrive, or Transport not required

- In the event of an accident or breakdown, the taxi driver will advise the school/ transport team, who will contact parents / carers to reassure them and give an estimated time of arrival of the school transport, or update to information. For out of authority schools; if the vehicle breaks down/is late then the taxi company will contact the escort/ parent/ carer/ school.
- If a vehicle breaks down with pupils on board, then the escort and pupils must remain on the vehicle whilst the driver contacts the transport company, unless safety would be compromised. Pupils may not leave the transport until a relief vehicle arrives, then the escort must ensure a safe transfer.
- In the event of the transport not arriving, please contact the Transport Operator for an update. For out-of-authority placements please contact Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit.
- It is your responsibility to inform the school if transport is not required due to your child's illness or a hospital appointment. For out-of-authority placements please contact Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit and the Escort who will inform the Administrator .

Please ensure that the school is clear if you are taking your child to an appointment and then returning them to school, as there would be a requirement for transport at the end of the afternoon.

Escort Absence/ Illness

Escorts should contact the Head Teacher/ Education Support Officer as soon as possible if ill /unable to do an escort run.

If the Escort has received specific training to support the medical needs of the pupil, finding cover for absence may be more challenging and the Parent/ Carer may be requested to support.

Parents of children attending an out of authority school

If the escort is ill then you will be notified by the Administration staff or Education Support Officer. However, if the escort is ill for the morning run, then the escort will contact you and the taxi company directly. In these circumstances and in order to ensure that your child gets to school, we would ask that you either:

- Act as escort in the taxi if your child is the sole passenger or
- Take your child to school.

We will endeavour to obtain a relief escort as soon as possible and you will be kept informed by the school or for Out of Authority pupils by the Education Support Officer.

Communication with Aberdeenshire Council Teams

For out-of-authority placements, Parents/Carers are responsible for notifying Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit in advance, of pupils leaving the school.

There are cost implications when there is a failure to cancel transport, which may be referred to parents if they have not communicated changes in a timely fashion to the authority.

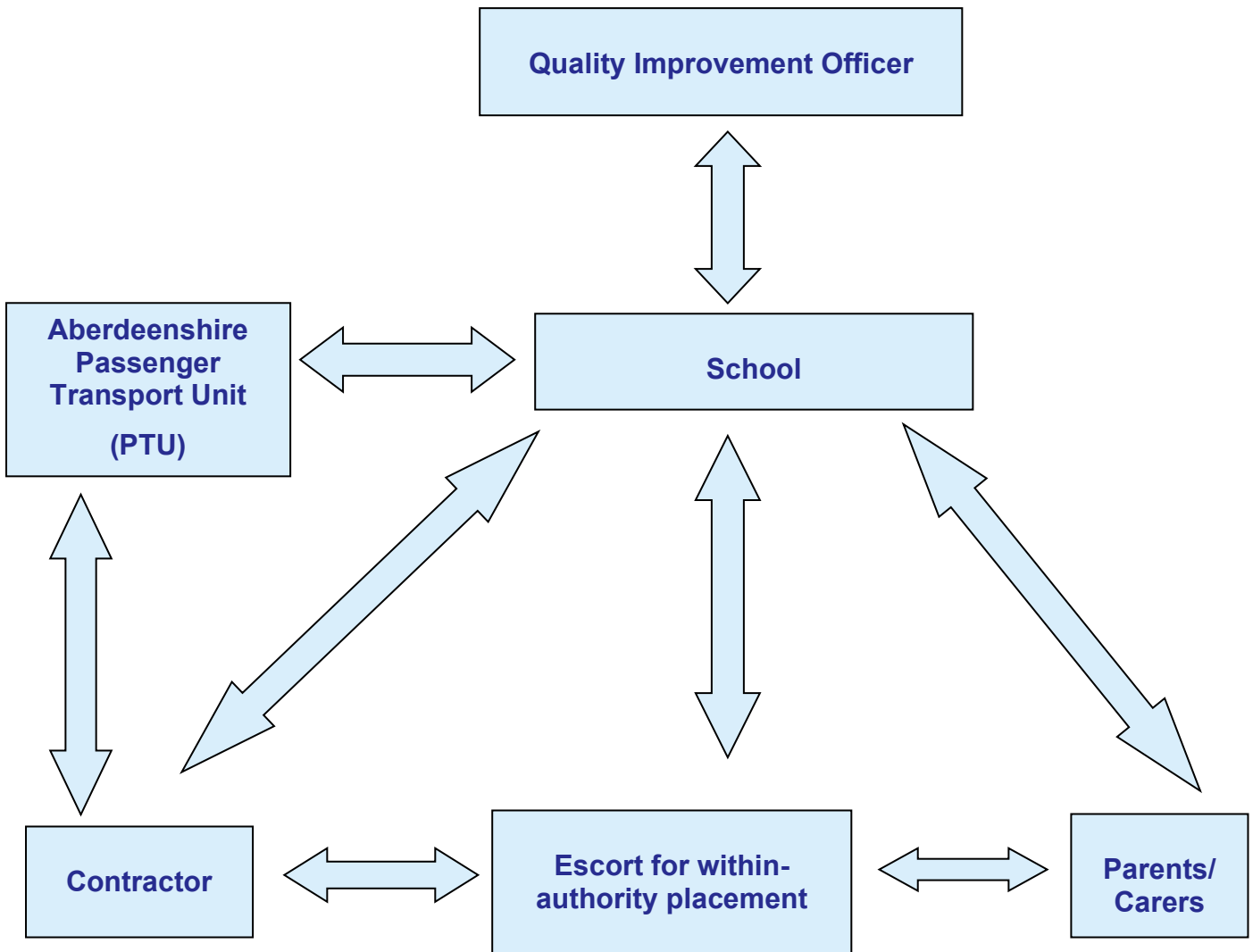
Parental Reimbursements

Some parents / carers may be able to provide their own child's transport to and from school. Aberdeenshire Council can set up a contract with the parents / carers in order to permit claims and reimbursement for mileage.

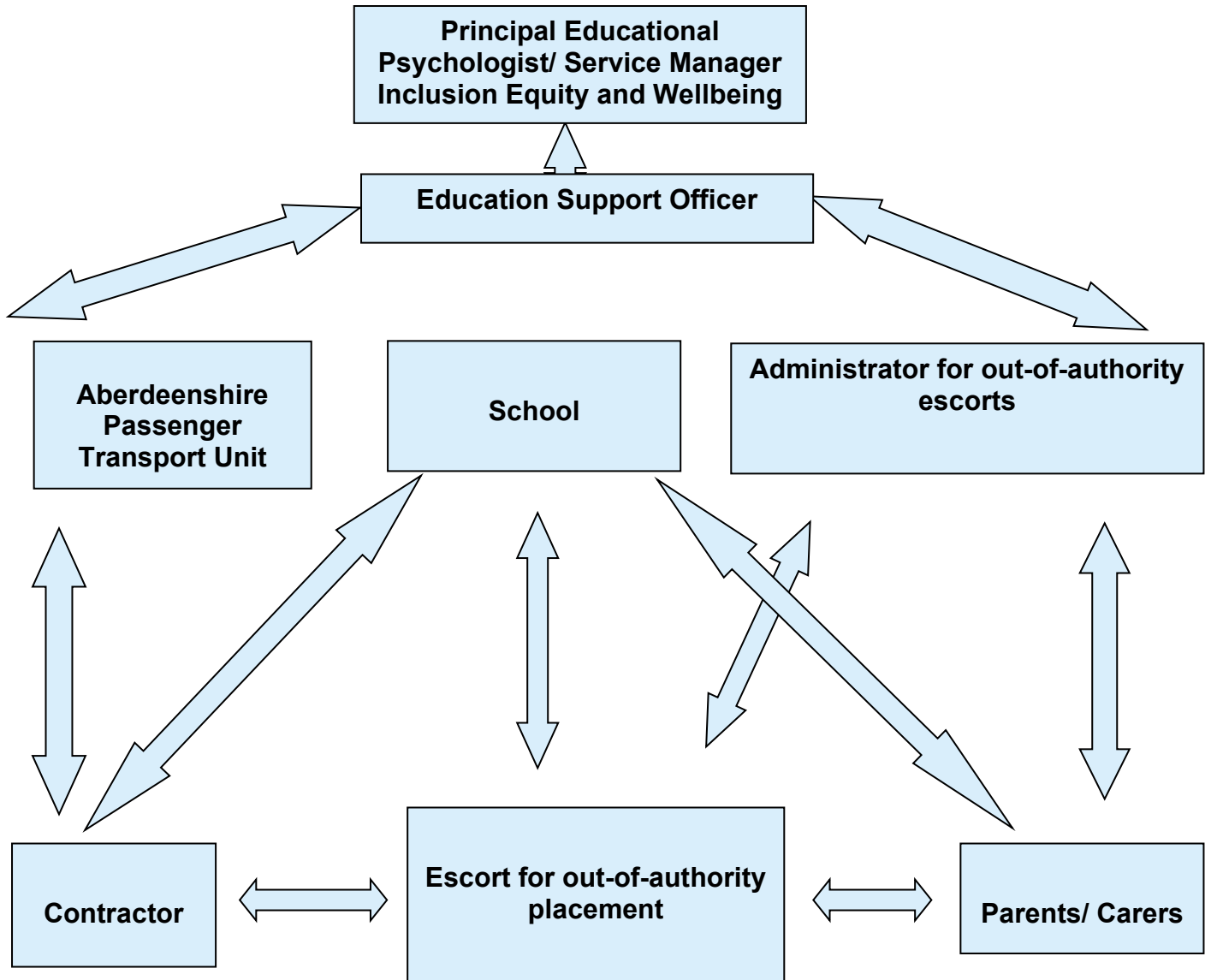
Parents / carers should contact Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit for further details.

There is an expectation that where parents / carers have been provided with a Motability vehicle for transporting a child with disabilities, they will use the vehicle to transport their child to and from school. Parental Reimbursement would apply in this case and created for this purpose through Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit.

Flow Chart of Communication for Within Authority Placement



Flow Chart of Communication for Out-of-Authority Placement



Appendix 1 – Contact details

INFORMATION FOR ESCORT

Education Establishment to attend				
Pupil's Name			D.o.B.	
Parent/Carer's Name				
Address				
Post Code			Tel No.	
Date Transport to Commence				
Days Transport Required	School starting time		School finishing time	
Sunday				
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				

SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT REQUIRED FOR PUPIL

BUGGY/WHEELCHAIRS

Delete where necessary

Is the pupil a buggy or wheelchair user?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Please provide make & model of buggy/wheelchair:	
Will the pupil travel in their buggy/wheelchair?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
If no, will the pupil require assistance to their seat?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)

CAR SAFETY SEATS

Is a car seat or booster cushion required?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Make & model of car seat (not booster) if required?	

HARNESSES etc.

Does the pupil require special harnesses etc.?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Please provide details of harnesses required	

Specialist equipment is provided by the Aberdeenshire Passenger Transport Unit through collaboration between the school, Parents/Carers and appropriate health representative (if appropriate) identifying what is required.

OTHER SPECIAL / MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Other specialist requirements/equipment (please specify)	
Is the pupil visually impaired?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Does the pupil have a hearing implant?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Does the pupil have a medical condition / allergy	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)
Please give details of any medical condition / emergency medication	
Can the pupil self-administer medication?	Yes/No (<i>delete one</i>)

- Should it be assessed in collaboration with specialist NHS Grampian staff that medical intervention is likely to be required to support the pupil, appropriate training will be given to the Escort.

INFORMATION FOR PARENT / CARER

Passenger Assistant's name	
Address	
Passenger Assistant's Tel no.	

Appendix 2 – Transport Safety Aids/ Equipment

Car Seats and Booster Seats

The link given below details to current Car Seat legislation in the UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules>

The law does allow for exemptions such as making a short necessary journey or on a minibus, however, unless an emergency situation arises it is best practice for car seats to be used at all times on ASN School Transport Contracts.

Further advice can be sought from the Client Transport Team by emailing asn.transport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Note – under no circumstances should a pupil ever be seated on an escort's knee and then have the seat belt worn around both passengers.

Best Practice – Children travelling in front seats.

Where possible all children should travel in the rear of a vehicle but if the vehicle is fitted with the appropriate car seat/restraints then a pupil can legally travel in the front seat of the vehicle.

Crelling Harness

Crelling Harnesses are a low risk medical device used to offer postural support or in the case of learning difficulties and challenging behaviour, a certain degree of restraint.

Note – Crelling Harnesses are not safety harnesses, the vehicle seat belt must be working in conjunction with the harness unless a certificate of Medical Exemption from Compulsory Seat Belt Wearing has been issued by a GP and is forwarded to the ASN Transport Team.

The use of a Crelling harness should be minuted as part of a discussion with the appropriate people e.g. Parent/Carer, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker. It should be included within the Pupil's Risk Assessment. It can then be ordered via the ASN Transport Team.

Note – if a pupil is already on authorised transport, the additional cost of the harness must be authorised by the QIO before it can be ordered. Please contact the ASN Transport Team for current harness costs.

Further information on Crelling Harnesses can be found here > <http://www.crelling.com/>

Any child using a Crelling Harness must be accompanied by an escort.

Bucklesafe™

Bucklesafe™ is a small device made out of tough red plastic that is designed to stop the accidental or deliberate undoing of a seatbelt. It can be provided by the ASN Transport Team on request.

Note – these devices can only be used on transport where there is an escort to un-do the Bucklesafe™. The driver of the vehicle is not able to un-do these unless in an emergency. The Bucklesafe™ cannot be used with seatbelts with sunken belt buckles. If the transport that the pupil is on has these, then a change of vehicle and/ or provider may be required. Please contact the ASN Transport Team for further information.

Parental Consent must be sought before using Bucklesafe -this should be recorded in a minute of a meeting and it should be included within the Pupil's Behaviour Support Plan and Risk Assessment / Transport Risk Assessment.

Further general information can be found here >
<http://www.bucklesafe.co.uk>

For more information please go to the following [link](#): Seat belts: the law

Appendix 3 - Glossary

Administrator	Administrator for relief Escorts
ASAP	As soon as possible
Contractor	Driver or Manager of company employed to provide transport
PTU	Passenger Transport Unit
PPP	Personal Performance Plan: meeting to discuss training requirements and reflect on working practice
E&CS	Education and Children's Services
EMIS	Employment Management Information Service
ESO	Education Support Officer
HR	Human Resources
HR&OD Team	Human Resources and Organisational Development
i-GRasp	Information system on Arcadia / Arcadia Lite
Journey	Pathway connecting two destinations e.g. home and school
MARS	Movement and Rehabilitation Service (based at Woodend Hospital)
Non-ambulant	Not able to walk
Out-of-authority	Out-with the zone for any school in the Aberdeenshire local authority catchment
Physical Intervention	Use of physical force to change behaviour
PSA	Pupil Support Assistant
PTU 500	Passenger Transport Unit form
PVG	Protection of Vulnerable Groups
QIO	Quality Improvement Officer
Redeployment	Move to another post with the same conditions of service
Redundancy	Termination of contract due to post no longer being required. Some paid notice may be included depending on conditions of service
Seizure	Illness caused by Epilepsy or other trigger resulting in temporary loss of ability to respond, may be accompanied by jerky limb movements and/or other physical signs

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Social Stories	Photo or symbol supported stories to assist a child's understanding of acceptable behaviours in a particular situation e.g. travel in a taxi
Transport	To include contracted taxi, minibus, bus, or public transport, or method of conveying child in a vehicle to/from school
Violent incident	Any incident when the child / young person has employed physical force inappropriately with a peer or adult
Visual prompts	Objects of reference, photos or symbols which assist the child's understanding / to follow instructions

Appendix 4 – Escort Absence Letter

Dear

I am writing regarding ... (pupil name).....'s transport arrangements to school and unexpected escort absence.

If the escort is ill then you will be notified by the office staff. However, if the escort is ill for the morning run, then the escort will contact you and the taxi company directly. In these circumstances and in order to ensure that (pupil name)gets to school, we would ask that you either:

- Act as escort in the taxi or
- That you take to school.

Please indicate below which option is most convenient for you so that the taxi company can be made aware of this.

We will do our best to provide a relief escort for the duration of the escort absence.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Please return this form to:

Please tick as appropriate

- I would prefer to act as escort in the taxi

- I will take to school in my own car

Signed

Date

