

Important information for school transport providers

Solihull Council thanks all taxi proprietors, drivers and guides for working with us during these unprecedented times. We are grateful for the routes that have been running during March, April and May. As schools start a phased reopening we will be contacting you to run more routes.

The Council is issuing this additional advice to support the safety of drivers, guides and pupils, following the principles of the latest guidance issued by the Government, the NHS and Public Health England.

Government specific Covid-19 advice:

Transport guidance for operators: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-transport-guidance-for-operators>.

Social distancing in the workplace:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/social-distancing-in-the-workplace-during-coronavirus-covid-19-sector-guidance>

Safer travel guidance for passengers: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

Health of the driver and guide

Before each journey you must consider whether it is appropriate to do so.

Is the driver or guide or anyone in their household in a high-risk group?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

- Does the driver, guide or anyone in their household have coronavirus symptoms: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/>
- a high temperature (37.8°C or greater)
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss of, or change to, your sense of smell or taste

If the driver or guide answer 'yes' to any of the above they must not work, and they should follow PHE advice on self-isolation.

Hygiene advice for drivers and guides

Drivers and guides can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus by:

- maintaining good hand hygiene (washing hands with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitiser)

- avoiding direct hand contact with eyes, nose and mouth
- using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes (or at least to cough/sneeze into the crook of their elbow) and dispose of tissues in a bin immediately
- where possible, ensure a fresh air supply is consistently flowing through vehicles
- use a facial covering of the mouth and nose, made of cloth or other textile (not surgical/medical masks) e.g. a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head. It may be prudent to notify passengers in advance that a driver or guide is wearing one to avoid any surprise at pick-up time. All items should be washed after use.
- Face coverings worn by drivers and guides protect others from the wearer if they are infected but have not yet developed symptoms, it may provide some protection for others you come into close contact with. Drivers and guides may choose to wear more than this – this is not a requirement.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on and after taking it off. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth at all times and store used face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them.
- Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose. Once removed, make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched.
- You should wash a face covering regularly. It can go in with other laundry, using your normal detergent.
- When wearing a face covering, take care to tuck away any loose ends.
- Advice on making a face covering can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

Please note that children and young people should not wear face coverings. This is for drivers and guides only.

Proprietors must determine their own arrangements for use of PPE from their own risk assessments. The Council does not supply PPE to contractors, however if the taxi company is struggling to source appropriate PPE from your usual sources, then you may request a small emergency PPE supply by emailing seis@solihull.gov.uk

DBS requirements

Normal DBS scheme rules apply – all drivers and guides must hold an Enhanced DBS through Solihull Council.

Vehicle hygiene and cleaning

To help reduce possible spread of the virus amongst passengers and your staff, areas of the vehicle which receive the most regular contact must be cleaned before the first passenger boards and after all passengers have alighted at the destination, on each journey. Clean surfaces with sanitising wipes or disinfectant spray to get rid of germs focussing on the following areas:

- door handles (exterior and interior)
- handrails/grab handles
- headrests/armrests
- seat backs
- seatbelts (tongue/buckle/webbing)
- driver controls (e.g. steering wheel, gearstick, handbrake, indicators, push buttons etc) if drivers share vehicles in your fleet
- shared mobile phones or radio handsets (be careful using liquids on electronic devices)

When cleaning your vehicle bear in mind:

- Using too much water/liquid can make interior fabrics damp, which will increase the likelihood that germs will collect and thrive. This can be overcome by being careful with the amount of water/disinfectant being used and maintaining good ventilation during cleaning and journeys
- Be careful, if using disinfectant spray, not to breathe-in any of the spray. Keep the vehicle ventilated
- Make sure wet floors and surfaces are dried before passenger's board

Manoeuvring wheelchairs - clean the wheelchair handles and brake levers prior to pushing the wheelchair

Car seats or booster seats - clean the hard surface areas (e.g. outer shell, buckles) before installing in the vehicle and clean them after use.

Cleaning fluids, cloths, disposable gloves and a suitable secure bin for their disposal should be provided on board and emptied after each run, or at the minimum at the end of every day.

Getting passengers on and off the vehicle and advice whilst travelling

Pick up and drop off. Driver and guide must not approach the house door, knock or ring doorbells. Parent must take their child to, and collect their child from, the vehicle as quickly as possible. Social distance must be maintained as far as possible and contact time kept to the minimum. The driver or guide should open and close the vehicle door.

When loading the vehicle the first passenger should sit at the back and the last at the front. Unload in reverse.

Hand sanitiser should be used before and after passenger handover.

If the passenger cannot fasten their own seat belt a parent from the same household should assist whilst minimising contact with the vehicle or any other people. If the guide needs to fasten a passenger's **seat belt/harness**, this should be done with minimal physical contact and avoiding face to face contact where possible.

The guide should not sit beside a pupil. If the vehicle is large enough, they should sit in a different row from the pupil. However, if there is a specific physical, behavioural

or medical need the guide should sit close to, preferably not next to the pupil. The guide may need to intervene if there is a specific in-journey incident.

Any unnecessary moving and handling or close sustained contact with the pupil/passenger will be avoided.

Operators should provide good vehicle ventilation when carrying passengers.

Any additional risk assessment you deem necessary should be carried out where circumstances change or where there are additional issues present.

Capacity – if demand for seats exceeds recommended capacity the Council may request a 'double trip'. This will only be viable on local / short journeys.

Seating arrangements will be based on one person per row of seats. For example, in an 8-seater vehicle with three rows of seats the driver will be in the front, the guide in the middle row and the passenger in the back row. The diagrams below are examples of other seating arrangements - the yellow dots indicating the seats to be occupied:

