# Strategic Questions for the Transport Team – PCF AGM 2025

## Roles & Responsibilities

* What are the distinct responsibilities of the SEN Team, SEN Transport, and the SEND School Travel Assistance Team when transport is required to a named setting in an EHCP?
* SEN Team – oversee placements and write and coordinate EHCP’s
* SEND School Travel Assistance Team work within the SEN Team and oversee the initial assessments for SEND travel eligibility.
* SEN Transport – sit within Transport Commissioning Service. This email has replaced the previous SPED email address. This team coordinate/arrange transport once they are instructed to do so. They oversee transport operations and liaise with operators, schools and relevant services
* School Planning and Policy email– this team sits within Education Infrastructure. They manage the home-to-school transport policy, oversee the personal travel budget scheme, act as a reviewing officer for SEN transport eligibility and suitability cases at stage 1&2
* Who is responsible for triggering the transport process once a setting is named in an EHCP?

The following sets out the process:

* SEND Plan writers finalise EHCP
* SEN team business support officers transfer relevant information from the EHCP into the Transport system (called Flexiroute)
* Information uploaded on to Flexiroute triggers the Transport Commissioning Service to review the child’s needs and offer a suitable mode of travel assistance. They could offer: a bus/rail pass, seat on a school bus, Independent Travel Training, a seat on a contracted vehicle or make a referral to the School Planning and Policy team to offer a Personal Travel Budget
* Is there a lead officer or team accountable for ensuring cross-department coordination to arrange transport to a named setting?

There is no specific lead officer with this role. There is shared responsibility across teams for each stage of in the process outlined above. A cross department (SEND School Travel Assistance Team, School Planning and Policy in Education and Transport Commissioning) Activity Plan is drawn up annually which sets out key milestone tasks for each team during the year. Regular check-point meetings are scheduled between the teams to ensure each is on track with what has been set in the Activity Plan and information sharing is taking place. The check-point meetings allow opportunities for each team to raise/share any issues which all should be aware of.

## Process and System Gaps

* What internal processes are in place to ensure that transport is arranged promptly when a named setting is confirmed in an EHCP?

See process outlined above

* How are transport needs assessed and processed when the named setting is not a mainstream or special school (e.g. tutoring, outreach, or alternative provision)?

Travel needs are automatically assessed if the child or young person is attending alternative provision that’s arranged by the SEND team or via the Fair Access Panel (FAP).

If the child or young person is attending alternative provision arranged specifically by the school, then the school will arrange travel.

For arrangements such as EOTAS (educated other than at school) then processes outlined in EOTAS policy will be applied. EOTAS policy available here: [Types of School and Education | Live Well Cheshire West](https://www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/Information/Types-of-school-and-education)

* At what point are families informed of the need to apply for transport — and who is responsible for giving this information?
1. If the child or young person has an EHCP and is of statutory school age then their transport eligibility assessment will be automatically carried out by the SEN team. If they are deemed eligible for travel assistance, they will not be required to apply for transport.
2. If the young person has an EHCP and is post 16 age and remaining at their existing special school their travel eligibility will be automatically assessed by the post 16 SEN team. If they are deemed eligible for travel assistance they will not need to apply for transport.
3. If the young person has an EHCP and is of post 16 age and is not remaining at their existing special school (e.g. moving to FE college etc), then they will need to apply annually for travel assistance once they have decided on the establishment they want to attend. The young person and their families should have on-going discussions with the post 16 SEN team or Young People’s Services throughout when considering where to go for post 16 education and any associated travel implications.

## Communication and Navigation

* What support is available to help families navigate the system when trying to arrange transport to a named setting?

If the child or young person is of statutory school age, then the SEN Team should be able to provide advice regarding transport eligibility and any implications regarding named setting/parental preference setting.

The home-to-school transport policy (statutory school age and post 16 statement) are published on the council’s [website](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport/policies-and-further-information), along with an accompanying guidance document which outlines frequently asked questions. In addition, easy-read documents have been produced for both the statutory school age policy and post 16 statement.

Information is also available on the Live Well page: [School Transport | Live Well Cheshire West](https://www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/Information/Details/5493?categoryId=5496)

* What steps are being taken to prevent families being passed between teams with no clear ownership or resolution pathway?

A ‘Reflections session’ across the relevant teams (SEND School Travel Assistance Team, School Planning and Policy in Education and Transport Commissioning) is arranged annually. The session is used to identify lessons learnt/areas where improvements can be made. It is an opportunity to review key themes of complaints/MP’s letters. It allows teams to discuss and clarify any misunderstandings/misinterpretation of policy and review existing processes for improvement. We would welcome the PCF’s input into future sessions.

Home-to-school transport policy training is provided by the School Planning and Policy team and is offered to any teams (SEN Team, Children’s Social Care, Young People’s Service etc.) to assist them in advising families. There has been consideration to make attendance at this training mandatory for all staff involved in placements so as to ensure they are able to appropriately advise families of transport eligibility and any implications, therefore ensuring families can make an informed decision right from the beginning.

* Could a single point of contact be introduced for cases involving transport to a named setting, especially when multiple teams are involved?

SEND School Travel Assistance Team should be the first point of contact if regarding transport eligibility

SEN transport if the query is regarding your child’s transport operational arrangements

## Public Information & Accessibility

* Is the information available on public platforms (e.g. Live Well Cheshire West) clear and accurate regarding transport requests, eligibility and criteria so that the parent speaks to the right team first time?

Yes, see earlier response above regarding published documents. However, we welcome feedback as to whether this can be further improved

* Can guidance be updated to explicitly include the process for securing transport to named settings beyond schools — such as tuition bases or specialist services?

Please see EOTAS policy on the Live well website: [Types of School and Education | Live Well Cheshire West](https://www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/Information/Types-of-school-and-education)

## Equity, Entitlement & Timeliness

* How does the local authority ensure equity in transport provision for all named settings, including those outside traditional school structures?

The council provides travel assistance in line with statutory duties via the home-to-school transport policy and post 16 statement. The EOTAS policy sets out support for those attending settings outside of traditional school structures.

* Could an automatic internal referral process be established when a setting is named in an EHCP, to reduce delays and parent burden?

This already exists, as outlined above. However, there can not be have an automatic assessment process for post 16 SEN where the FE establishment attended may change as this can be late into the summer. The course studied may also be offered at a nearer setting, so an annual assessment is required to determine if the young person is still attending the nearest setting or whether the young person is in a position to either travel independently or begin developing their independence by a referral to the Independent Travel Training service.

* What safeguards are in place to ensure transport arrangements are in place by the start date of a new named setting?

Awareness of each teams timeframes, whether that be statutory or the constraints of procurement processes/availability of operators/availability of suitable vehicles etc. Each team will always endeavor to respond to requests in a timely manner. Where we are not able to secure transport arrangements by the start date of the new named setting the SEN team will advise families accordingly.

## Learning & Service Development

* How are lessons from complaints or delays in transport to named settings being captured and used to inform service improvement?

See earlier response regarding the annual Reflections Session. Annual activity planning to provide on-going opportunity for each team to raise awareness of issues and to jointly work towards a solution.

* Are there plans for a cross-team review to improve joint working and communication where transport is required to non-traditional or complex named settings?

See EOTAS policy : [Types of School and Education | Live Well Cheshire West](https://www.livewell.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/Information/Types-of-school-and-education)

**Questions from PCF members via our AGM booking form:**

* If you don’t quality for transport then what options are there as all the services are engaged with contracts already. The council are not allowing students to access buses with spaced even with the bus companies agreeing to transport children who dont qualify at a fee. This is a monopolisation of the system leaving paying customers left with no other options.

Clarification required – is this in relation to the spare seat policy?

* Do they understand the importance of continuity and consistency for children and young people with SEND?

Yes, absolutely. There is engagement across all teams to ensure the travel offer is suitable. Where changes to travel arrangements are proposed, teams will ensure proposals are checked with the SEN team and Schools. There will be times where changes in travel cannot be planned for, such as a last-minute change in driver due to holidays or illness. The Transport Commissioning Team do ask operators to notify them if they know there will be a change so that families can be advised. However, the Transport Commissioning Service also has a duty to comply with procurement regulations. Contracts are offered to operators for a set period (3 or 5 years, for example) and when this contract expires, there is a duty to retender the contract. The commissioning cycle also supports the Council’s commitment to provide social value across the Borough and supports local businesses and provides employment for local people.

* What is the outcome of the review? Will my son’s transport stay the same?

The Targeted Transport Program has reviewed the majority of travel routes. Where travel arrangements will be changed, families will be notified in sufficient time and operators have been instructed to arrange meet and greets over the summer

* Does my child qualify for transport assistance if he has been denied an EHCP from school?

If your child is attending their nearest suitable school and has needs/and or a disability that prevents them from getting there then they may qualify for travel assistance. Families can apply on-line and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. [Will you qualify? | Cheshire West and Chester Council](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/school-and-college-transport/will-you-qualify)