



To the Parent/Guardian of:

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**My Ref:**

**Please Ask For:** Rizwana Akram

**Direct Dial:** 01254 585003

Dear Parents

### **Covid-19 Preparations for School Transport ahead of September**

As you will be aware, the Secretary of State for Education has announced that Schools and Further Education Colleges will be returning in September 2020. The Local Authority has been working on plans to ensure that this return happens as smoothly and safely as possible, and as part of this process, we have reviewed the situation with regard to school transport arrangements.

We must continue to fulfil our statutory duty to all pupils who are entitled to free home to school transport to ensure that they are able to travel to school safely. We have also considered the position of many other pupils in our borough who have previously been able to make use of surplus capacity in the home to school transport provision as fare payers. We are writing now to let you know about some changes we are having to make due to the current health situation.

Pupils who are entitled to free home to school transport are provided with season tickets for their home to school transport. Until now, fare paying pupils using school transport provision could choose to either purchase a season ticket or pay a daily fare. However, in line with Government guidance, all the vehicles providing home to school transport from September 2020 will be operating on a cashless system (to reduce the risk of transmission). Therefore, any fare paying pupil who wants to use the borough's school transport service from September 2020 will need to purchase a season ticket for the relevant journey. The transport operators will not take daily fare payments or accept passengers without a season ticket.

In order to assist with your family budgeting, we offer fare payers the option of purchasing season tickets on a monthly, termly or yearly basis. If your child wants to secure a fare paying seat on home to school transport provision, please contact Rizwana Akram - 585003 to make arrangements for the purchase of a season ticket.

However, please consider alternative options, eg walking/cycling, as current guidance from the Government is to avoid public transport whenever possible. Due to the current unprecedented situation deadlines MUST be strictly adhered to. Council staff are advised to work remotely and as a result it will take longer than usual to process your season ticket.

Deadlines:

If you wish to pay by monthly Direct Debit the application forms must be requested and returned to the School Transport Team by Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

If you wish to pay termly or annually you must contact us on the number above by Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

If you do not meet these deadlines you will need to make alternative arrangements as cash cannot be accepted on the bus.

In addition to only having cashless payment arrangements, the transport operators will have to comply with any other requirements imposed by the Government now or in the future, such as limits on the number of passengers permitted on any one vehicle. This means that if there are insufficient spaces for everyone who wants to use the service, the borough will have to grant season tickets first to those pupils who are entitled to receive a free home to school transport service from us.

Remaining places/season tickets will then have to be allocated on a first come first served basis as this is the fairest way of dealing with that situation. At the moment, we believe that sufficient spaces will be available for all who wish to purchase them, and we hope that this will continue to be the case.

Yours faithfully

School Transport Team