

# Wakefield Council Passenger Services

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# Introduction

**An overview of the Passenger Transport Service and who we provide transport to.**

**Getting the balance right between in-house provision and commissioned in transport.**

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities(SEND) school transport and the current challenges.**

**Passenger Assistants and recruitment.**

# About The Service

## Key Functions

We provide a front-line transport service to allow **children and vulnerable adults** to access the services they require in a safe and comfortable way.

To do this we have an in-house Passenger Transport Service, a Passenger Transport Taxi Framework and a Co-operation Agreement with the Combined Authority.

There are 4600 passenger trips per day.

We also provide transport advice, support, training and guidance to managers and staff based within other Council Directorates with vehicles to ensure passenger safety and compliance with related transport legislation (Section 19 Permit operations, Passenger Assistant Training, MiDAS)

# Transport Provision

## CHILDREN

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Children with complex care needs (high end medical conditions)
- Children in Care (contact visits)
- Respite Care Transport (overnight and weekend stays)
- Children's Resource Centres / Homes
- Cross boundary arrangements with other Councils
- School meals deliveries
- Tendered school buses
- School cards – network buses
- Schools swimming – to and from pools

# Transport Provision

## ADULTS

- Adults with Physical and Learning Disabilities
- Respite Care (including urgent cases)
- Stroke clubs - day centres
- Women's Asian Welfare Association (WAWA)
- Adults to Education Centres
- Homeless people 24/7 (temp / permanent locations and out of district)
- Syrian and Ukrainian refugees from airport and to education
- Community Transport (Council funded)

## OTHER TRANSPORT

- Wheelchair services – equipment deliveries and collections
- Schools Library Services – moving schoolbooks
- Furniture removals – Council buildings / clearances
- Corporate centre (CX, Leader, Mayor)
- Emergency planning response and recovery – Evacuations (fire, flood)

# Getting the balance right in-house or commissioned-in?

All requests for transport from right across the Council come into one central point (commissioning team) and are triaged to determine the best provision either:-

- **In-house resources** – own vehicles and drivers.
- **Commissioned-in resources**- taxis / minibuses / buses

The limiting factor / balance is the amount of work we have available for in-house resources in the middle of the day between school runs.

There is only a limited amount of work in the middle of the day and it is not guaranteed, if it diminishes then vehicles would be stood for that period of day.

This restricts the amount of school runs we can do and we have lots of these.

When this point is reached then we would have to commission school transport in am and pm.

# Getting the balance right in-house or commissioned-in?

## In House

Contract Procedural Rules: *“Where the Council has an in-house service, external companies **must not be used** for these services unless the Service Manager responsible for the in-house service confirms specifically that they are unable to meet the requirements on that occasion”.*

## A working day consists of:-

### Mornings and afternoons

- Fixed, term time, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities school transport. With passenger assistant.
- Children with high end complex care needs school transport –requiring a medical passenger assistants (registered nurse & paediatric experience).
- Adults transport - WAWA, stroke clubs.

### Middle of day

- Respite care, (have to enter properties).
- School meals transport.
- Other transport requests that can be accommodated.

# Getting the balance right in-house or commissioned-in?

Typical days work to maximise use of resources and minimise downtime:-

- school / adults run - school meals - lunch - respite care /other - school / adults run
- school run - swimming - lunch - swimming - school run

## Commissioned-in - Taxi Framework

We call off this framework if we are unable to do in-house or its not cost effective to do in-house.

- 3 quotes obtained from operators for each transport request to obtain best value.
- Short term – constant amendments – mainly used for Children in Care.
- Homeless people - evenings and weekends.
- Any other transport requests from across the Council not done in house

We also commission via the Combined Authority for term time SEND transport.



# Wakefield SEND Transport Provision

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities SEND Transport is the second largest cost to Wakefield Council after Adult Social Care.

- 355 Contracts - 150 are single person journeys
- 60 operators plus our own in-house operation
- 900 Children

We also have Passenger Assistants to look after the children on the vehicle.

- 240 Passenger Assistants

# Current Challenges of SEND School Transport

- Number of SEND children increasing & waiting (statutory duty).
- More complex cases / behaviour issues needing Single Person Journeys.
- Number of new homes been built in the district (1600 pa).
- Lack of school places - More out of district placements.
- Covid impacts and world events leading to increasing tender costs.
- Driver shortages (covid impact, left for other guaranteed work and incentives, ageing workforce).
- Increased need for wheelchair accessible vehicles – lack of investment by operators.
- Operators / drivers not able to afford to keep spare vehicles – no cover.
- New vehicle lead times - parts shortage– microchips / steel – TC delays - vehicles stood.
- Increased amount of equipment – lack of awareness and training – harnesses / buckle bosses.
- Independent Travel Trainers - network buses being cancelled.
- Medical transport – lack of medical professional Passenger Assistants.
- Personal Transport budgets - declined by Parents / Carers, need respite
- Operators, Taxis and Drivers being licenced in other districts - lack of Wakefield taxis.
- Lack of Passenger Assistants and issues recruiting.

# Passenger Assistants

170 Passenger Assistants are employed directly by the Council

- Time worked is a split shift am and pm
- They only get paid for the time they actually work could be 1hr morning and 1hr afternoons
- Pay is low but costs are seen as high due to the number of them
- We have shortages and recruitment issues, one starts and one finishes.

This is why we have to utilise Passenger Assistants from taxi operators – we have to ensure the relevant checks have been carried out (DBS) and they have been trained (PATs, restraints, safeguarding first aid etc).

Currently 70 work on the contracts employed by the operators.

# Summary

We have a statutory duty to provide transport for Children to education settings and certain adults to day services.

The main issue is that the number of children is constantly increasing which results in the need for additional resources internal and external and increased costs and budget pressures and brings further challenges.

This is not just a Wakefield problem it is evident that it is a national one and difficult to address and solve.

# THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS / DISCUSSION