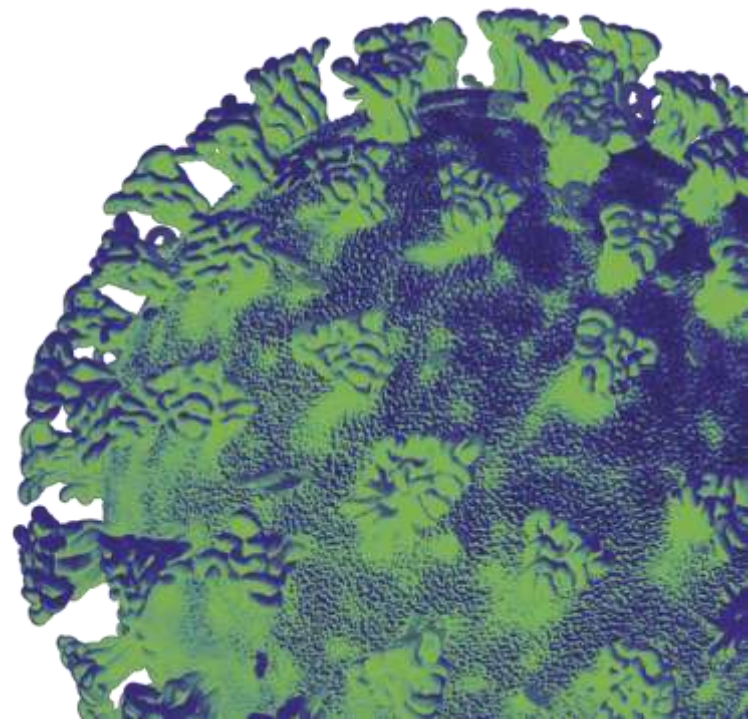
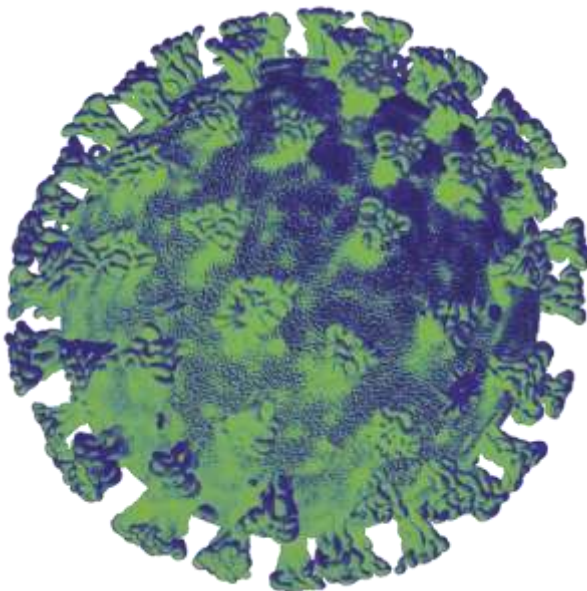
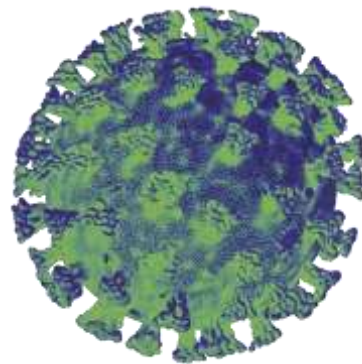




Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Technical Advisory Group Children and Education subgroup Advice on School Transport

31 July 2020



Advice on School¹ Transport from the Technical Advisory Group Children and Education subgroup – 31st July 2020

School transport Key messages - Summary

1. This advice is based on a balance of evidence specifically about Covid-19 together with that relating to the wider wellbeing of children and benefits of education.
2. Active travel (such as walking or cycling) to school brings a range of benefits for children's health and the environment. It is also the mode of travel that carries least risk of transmission of coronavirus. As far as it is safe to do so, children young people and their parents/carers should be encouraged to travel to school or college on foot, bike or scooter.
3. Dedicated school transport² should be regarded as an extension of the school estate. Children and young people using the transport daily should be grouped into cohorts so reducing the number of contacts.
4. Public transport journeys are likely to bring together those at lower risk of contracting and transmitting Covid-19 (younger people) with those at higher risk. This situation is unlikely to occur on transport provided for school pupils only.
5. School transport will involve mixed age groups of pupils, but the risk of transmission between them is likely to be acceptably low as long as a range of mitigations are in place².
6. Important mitigations include: hygiene, ventilation, improved cleaning regimes including regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces, and regular handwashing.
7. Drivers and staff on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission with screens and PPE.
8. Where public transport (including bus, taxi, train, ferry) is required for school-aged children (up to the age of 19) to attend school, the general advice and guidance from Welsh Government and Transport for Wales should be followed. This currently includes the mandatory use of face coverings for those aged 11 and over, and physical distancing where possible.
9. Local authorities and schools should continue to work with transport providers to increase capacity as far as is reasonably possible and consider the introduction of staggered start/finish times. Plans should where possible avoid mixing pupils/students from different schools/colleges on the same transport.
10. This advice assumes no significant worsening in the low background levels of infection in the Welsh population as monitored by 'circuit breaker' measures,

¹ School Transport includes transport to FE settings

² Bonell et al 2020 *An evidence-based theory of change for reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission in reopened schools* <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829220308807>

and on prompt and well-functioning systems for close monitoring, rapid testing and tracing of suspected cases.

11. Precautions may become more relaxed as the prevalence and incidence of Covid-19 in Wales reduce. Conversely, measures may need to be strengthened or reintroduced if there is evidence of a resurgence, or in the light of localised outbreaks. Where other relevant new evidence has implications for this advice, it will also need to be taken into account.
12. If the further unlocking of restrictions, including indoor settings and tourism, results in an increase in cases in August and September, this advice will need to be used flexibly in local areas depending on local transmission patterns. This could mean that distancing may be required, and the use of face coverings introduced in school transport if prevalence increases in local areas. Local data on community transmission should be actively used to inform risk assessments and decision making.

13. **Detailed advice and context:**

Key questions:

- Whether, how and when can social distancing be reduced for school-age children on dedicated school transport, private hire vehicles, or public transport?
 - What mitigation measures would be required in the event of the practical need for reduced social distancing?
 - Would this advice differ by age of the child or young person?
 - What should be the position for drivers and/or other adults travelling with school-age children on dedicated school transport?
 - What implications might any such advice have for school-age children travelling on public transport to/from schools?
 - Should face coverings be advised or mandatory for those travelling on dedicated school transport?
14. The Covid-19 Children and Schools Technical Advisory Cell (C+S TAC) has advised that, subject to continued low background rates of the Covid19 virus, and to effective TTP and mitigations being in place, the balance of the evidence suggests that no distancing should be required between children in primary schools.
 15. The evidence is less clear for older pupils but at present we support the same approach being taken in secondary schools on the basis of the balance of known risks and the effectiveness of mitigations.
 16. Two metre distancing should remain in place wherever possible between adults, and between adults and children who are not from the same household.

17. Dedicated school transport can be considered to be part of the greater school estate and therefore all mitigations which apply in school should also apply on dedicated school transport. Adult members of the public do not travel on dedicated school buses and therefore the physical distancing measures that should be applied are those relating to distances between pupils.
18. Mitigations include: hygiene, ventilation, improved cleaning regimes within dedicated school transport, including regular and thorough cleaning of surfaces, and regular handwashing and sanitising.
19. Schools should engage with all children and young people to establish shared understanding and ownership of hygiene rules for the protection of all, and regularly reinforce the importance of these key social responsibility messages.
20. Hand washing and /or hand sanitising should be done regularly throughout the day including on every entry to the school building.
21. As far as possible school-aged children should be assigned seats which they use consistently.
22. The consumption – and especially the sharing – of food and drink (including snacks) should not be allowed on school transport.
23. Children or young people must not board dedicated school or public transport if they, or a member of their household, have symptoms of coronavirus.
24. If a child or young person develops symptoms while at school they should be sent home and must not travel on regular school transport. The school should contact the parent/carer to make appropriate and safe arrangements to collect the child or young person. In this situation, use of a face covering by the child or young person with symptoms should be considered to reduce risk of transmission.
25. As a way to increase school transport capacity, local authorities are encouraged to continue to work with transport providers to support staggered start and finish times in the school day. Other additional capacity should be sought where practical.
26. Risk can be reduced by avoiding unnecessary mixing. Where it is possible and practical to do so, family groups should travel together, and children and young people from the same class groupings should travel together.
27. As a primarily preventive measure, schools should avoid sharing school buses if possible.
28. Any adults travelling by dedicated school transport should comply with requirements for public transport (2 metre distancing where possible, with the wearing of face coverings).
29. Many children with Additional Support Needs may require adult carers to travel with the children, often in close proximity. In general, these adults should be very alert to symptoms, and should wear face coverings if compatible with the care and wellbeing of the child. However it is recognised that face coverings may limit communication and could cause distress to some children.

30. Drivers and staff on public transport, and to a lesser extent on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission. In some situations environmental changes within a vehicle may be appropriate, such as the installation of protective barriers or safety screens between the driver and passengers. It is for the relevant licensing authorities, operators and the firm or individual to make decisions on whether changes within a vehicle are required, based on their own assessment of risk.
31. Drivers and other staff assistants should follow general hygiene guidance. Where hand washing is not possible hand sanitiser should be used regularly throughout the journey, in particular after performing any tasks that involve touching a surface that may have been touched by someone else.
32. Drivers and other staff must not continue to work if they have symptoms, or if someone in their household has symptoms. They should make appropriate arrangements to go home as soon as possible if they begin displaying symptoms while at work, and should follow the Test Trace and Protect guidance.
33. School-aged children on public transport should follow the generic guidance from Transport for Wales. This includes wearing face coverings for children aged 11 and over, and social distancing where possible.
34. Schools should work with all children and young people to develop their capacities as responsible citizens particularly when preparing to travel on public transport. Encouraging effective use of hand sanitizers, wipes and touch-free bins should be viewed as essential to reduce the transmission of the virus.
35. Local authorities should work with transport providers to increase capacity and introduce dedicated seating or carriages for school-aged children where possible, so that school-aged children may be grouped together.
36. Local authorities are recommended to work with transport providers to gain assurance that infection prevention and control measures are in place.
37. Face coverings should not be required for most children (those clinically advised to wear a covering would be an exception) travelling on dedicated school transport. However this should be kept under review in the event of increasing background rates of Covid19 infection.
38. Drivers and staff on school transport, are at relatively higher risk of exposure and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that they are protected from airborne and surface transmission, with mitigations such as Perspex screens and PPE as necessary.
39. On public transport, adults from the same household travelling with school-age children should wear face coverings. Adults who are travelling with the child in a work capacity should use the recommended PPE. In all cases, the needs and wellbeing of the child may determine some modification of these requirements.