

# Travel Assistance Service (TAS) Passenger and Parent/Carer Guide



## Home to School Transport 2023-2024

TR26

Thank you for taking the time to read through this guide, produced by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's Travel Assistance Service in co-production with Passengers, Parents and Carers.

We hope that you and/or your child/foster child have a positive experience when using the home-to-school transport service, and encourage you to offer feedback, suggestions and thoughts. By working together, we can ensure that everybody has access to the best service possible.

Every passenger, parent/carer, member of transport staff and journey matters to TAS - as such, we actively encourage an open dialogue to ensure we can continue to offer a positive, safe and reliable service to everybody we work with.

### Notes

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## Working in Partnership

We believe open and honest dialogue is the key to a good relationship and we always welcome the opportunity to hear any suggestions, feedback, or your thoughts regarding the home-to-school transport service.

We have written this guide in co-production with passengers, parents and carers and schools based on what an excellent Travel Assistance Service should look like. Our aim is to ensure that Sandwell's Travel Assistance Service is delivering the best possible service where all stakeholders are valued for the contribution they can make.

We hope that this will be a living document and we encourage passengers, parents and carers to use it, adapting and improving this guidance in co-production with the Travel Assistance Service; creating an environment where our passengers can be supported to get the best Travel Assistance Service possible.

Thank you,

Travel Assistance Service  
Sandwell MBC

## **Our vision for an excellent Travel Assistance Service:**

- The welfare of passengers is at the heart of our decision making and services.
- There is a commitment to treat everyone fairly and for service users to feel valued and respected.
- We recognise the unique nature and individual needs of each of our passengers.
- We demonstrate a high standard of care and conduct and TAS members of staff demonstrate their expertise in their field.
- We comply with and operate contracts within relevant standards, regulations, policies, procedures and legal guidance.
- We provide a dedicated transport monitoring and compliance officer who will undertake periodic monitoring visits.
- We work in a transparent manner and are open and honest with all communication and feedback.
- We provide you, parents/carers, schools/centres, transport providers and transport staff with clear guidance to ensure the smooth running of transport provision for passengers.

- We make contacting TAS as easy as possible. Our office hours are Mon-Fri 7.30am – 5.00pm term time and Mon-Fri 8.00am – 4.00pm non-term time:

**Generic email: [travel\\_assistance@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:travel_assistance@sandwell.gov.uk)**

**0121 569 4888**

- We have invested in a bulk texting and emailing service enabling us to communicate with parents and carers quickly and effectively.
- Enabling passengers, parents and carers to have a voice in the service and a means of raising collective issues, making sure that stakeholders are consulted in a meaningful, open way on matters which affect them.

# Travel Assistance Service Passengers Charter

We have written this charter with children and young people who use our service. They told us what an excellent Travel Assistance Service looked like to them. Please take some time to look through the following ten 'golden rules' of the Travel Assistance Service. Our Transport providers have been provided with this information so they are aware of, and have agreed to, the expectations our passengers have of the service they deliver.

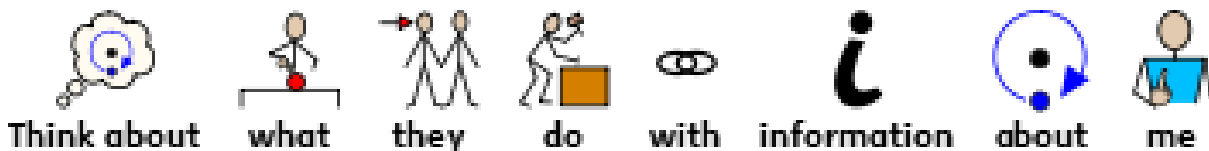
**People who arrange and deliver my transport, should:**

## 1. Be honest, professional and friendly



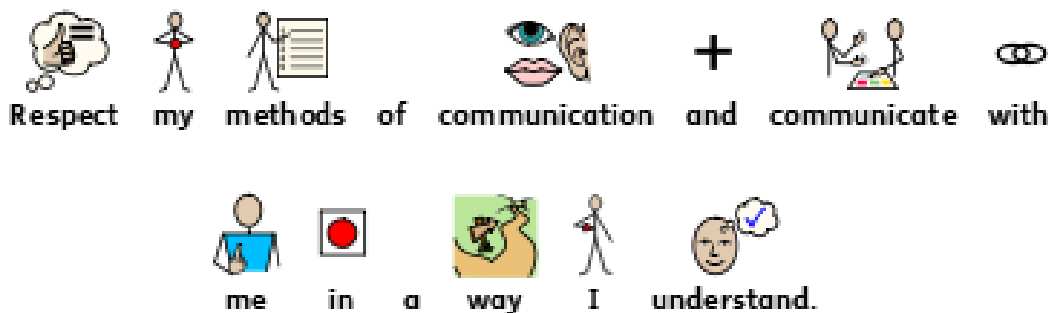
This means: Saying “Hi” and “Bye” to passengers, smiling, telling the truth, talking in English, be trained, helpful and care about the job that they do.

## 2. Think about what they do with information about me



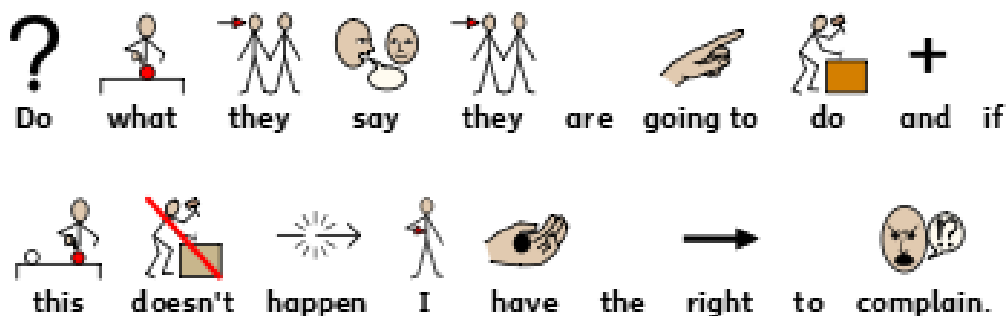
This means: Don't tell anyone or share information about me with others who don't need to know.

### 3. Respect my methods of communication and communicate with me in a way I understand.



This means: When I want to interact, people should talk to me, even if I use other ways of communicating. I should not be left with no-one talking to me or acknowledging me. Don't talk about me as though I'm not there or presume that I can't understand you.

### 4. Do what they say they are going to do and if this doesn't happen, I have the right to complain.



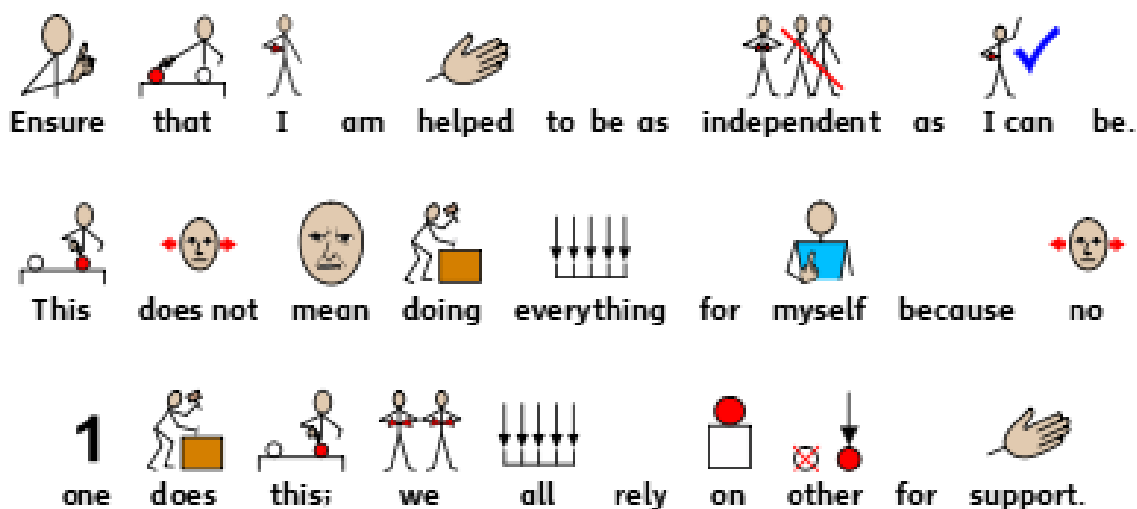
This means: If I am unhappy about my transport or transport staff I can talk to my parents/carers or school/centre staff and they will tell the right person to help me fix this. People should listen to my complaint and do something about it.

**5. Make sure that I am safe in the vehicle and safe with transport staff. I have the right not to be abused, hurt or neglected.**



This means: The people making my transport arrangements will make sure that the vehicles are safe and transport staff have a DBS check and the training that they need to do their job well. They are safe to work with children, young people and adults.

**6. Ensure that I am helped to be as independent as I can be. This does not mean doing everything for myself because no-one does this; we all rely on others for support.**



This means: I should be given support to do as much as I can do for myself.



## 7. Understand the importance for me to be at school/centre on time.



This means: My education/time is very important! When I am late I miss out on experiences and opportunities that are good for me and I may fall behind my peers.

## 8. Understand that every passenger can have good and bad days, like everybody else.



This means: My mood and behaviour can change just like everybody else's. It's important to understand that I don't choose to travel to my school/centre in this vehicle, with these staff or with these people and they are not all my friends. Sometimes we might upset each other, and we might need your help to sort this out.

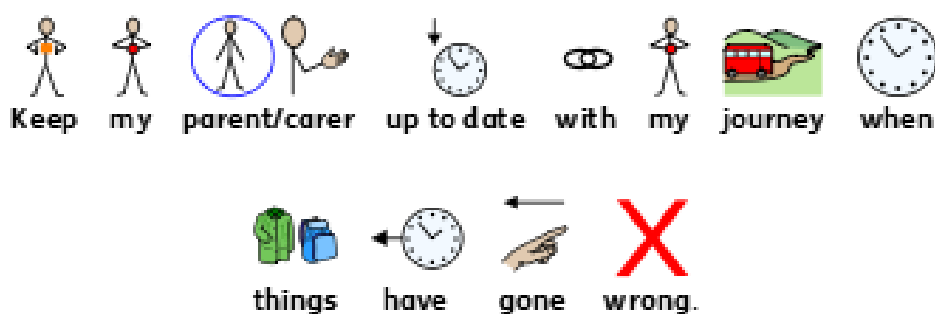
Sometimes my journey to and from my school/centre can be a very long time on top of my day. I may be tired, need my medication, not feel well or make a mistake. Tomorrow is a new day.

**9. Provide nice, clean vehicles and give me the opportunity to meet the people who will be taking me on my journey before they take me.**



This means: Transport staff should try to come to meet me before they have to take me to school, I may feel anxious and need to see the staff and the vehicle who will be taking me. Try to provide the same vehicle and staff as often as you can as I can find changes difficult.

**10. Keep my parent(s)/carer(s) up to date with my journey when things have gone wrong.**



This means: They worry about me, they will want to know I'm ok and when I will arrive at school or get home. If something happens they will want to know the truth.

## The travel assistance process and how travel arrangements are made

- **Process for passengers with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).** Schools complete the travel assistance request form with parents/carers. This form is then processed by the SEN service to establish eligibility for travel assistance and the method of travel assistance to be provided.
- SEN then send you/parents/carers a Passenger Information Form to complete. The information on this form is used to procure transport to ensure that the passenger's specific needs are catered for. It is important that as much information as possible is provided to enable successful and safe arrangements to be put in place. **There will be a delay in setting up transport for you, your child/foster child if we do not receive this form.**
- If you/your child/foster child has specific identified medical conditions such as Epilepsy, Type 1 Diabetes or are required to travel with oxygen, TAS will require further information to complete an Individual risk assessment.
- **The passenger, parents/carers, schools/centres and social workers must ensure that the passenger's information is kept up to date** with SEN, TAS and the transport staff, i.e. height and weight (for car seats etc), equipment requirements (e.g. harness), medical needs, medication and behaviour. This enables TAS to ensure that the transport arrangements are as safe as they can be for all parties, that they are compliant with legislation and continue to meet the passenger's needs.

- Transport will only be provided to and from your address and school/centre address stated on the travel assistance request form. No alternative address can be used without SEN approval.
- TAS use a Framework to procure transport, allowing transport providers who have passed comprehensive assessment criteria to apply for transport work.
- TAS have robust systems in place to set up and manage transport contracts throughout their duration. Starting from the offer of the meet and greet (between passengers, parents/carers and transport staff), through to dealing with any day to day operational issues that may arise.
- For new passengers, an introductory 'meet and greet' will take place between the transport staff, passenger and family before transport starts – this could be face-to-face, or via telephone/ video call. In instances where there is a quick turnaround of transport arrangements this may not always be possible.
- **We have enhanced safeguarding standards:** All drivers and passenger assistants will have enhanced criminal record background checks (DBS) to enable them to work with children, young people and adults. Following the introduction of our new capability tests, transport staff will have demonstrated proficiency in both verbal and written English and passed courses in TAS Passenger Assistant Training (TASPATS), Level 1 Safeguarding, Child Protection and Child Sexual Exploitation

awareness training. Transport staff will then be issued a TAS identification badge which is renewable annually.

- Working in partnership with our Transport providers our priority is to ensure that all passenger journeys are the shortest and within 50 minutes each way.
- All routes are checked by TAS to ensure that the journey is compliant within 50 minutes (including any extra time that may be required for specific passengers to board/alight vehicles).
- TAS will always ensure that all passengers arrive at their destination as soon as possible. In the unfortunate situation of a vehicle breakdown or a change of transport staff/vehicle, our priority will always be to ensure a replacement vehicle or staff are dispatched as soon as possible and parents/carers are kept informed using our texting service. The school/centre will be informed following this if required.
- On occasion and at short notice, transport staff and vehicles may change, wherever possible you will be informed as soon as TAS has been made aware. This can be for a variety of reasons such as illness, training, leaving the company and servicing etc. We advise transport providers to give TAS, passengers, parents and carers as much notice as possible but accept that in all situations this is not always possible. All replacement transport staff whether temporary or permanent will have been through the TAS badging process and are therefore authorised to work on

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) transport contracts.

- While the transport service can generally guarantee a reliable and punctual service, unpredictable factors such as passenger lateness/illness, adverse weather, roadworks, heavy traffic, vehicle breakdown or other unforeseen situations may result in occasions where vehicles arrive later than scheduled. In these circumstances we ask for your patience and understanding, and if you are concerned we advise you to contact TAS for more information.
- Unfortunately, specific pick up/drop off times of passengers cannot be arranged to meet personal circumstances. This is due to a route for an individual or group of passengers being put together to ensure the shortest amount of time on a vehicle.
- Transport arrangements, such as pick-up/drop off times may change when other passengers join or leave the route or if school/centre opening hours change.
- On occasion, the transport provider may need to change – you will be informed as soon as possible if this happens.

### **Keeping Passengers information up to date**

All Passengers information **must** be kept up to date and **must be reviewed annually**. All Passengers and Parents/Carers will be contacted at the end of each academic year to ensure that the information TAS hold is accurate and up to date.

## **How Passengers and Parents/Carers can support transport arrangements:**

- **Ensuring you/your child/foster child is ready from approximately 7.45am** (unless expressly confirmed in writing by TAS). If passengers are not ready to leave when the vehicle arrives, the vehicle will unfortunately have to continue with the route to ensure that other passengers arrive at their destination on time. A calling card will be left at your property. It will then be your/your parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that you/your child/foster child is taken to school/centre and to contact TAS to request a return journey.
- You may be charged for any costs incurred relating to waiting times should the transport arrive and there is not a responsible adult home to receive your child/foster child or the passenger is unable to enter your home/building when being dropped off if they are a key holder and transport are required to wait with the passenger. TAS reserves the right to suspend transport and it will only be reinstated once confirmation is received from the parent/carer that there are appropriate arrangements in place.
- **Parents/Carers must take passengers to the vehicle:** This is not the Driver/Passenger Assistant's responsibility. Transport staff will assist the passenger onto the vehicle, ensuring that they have their seatbelt on and any relevant safety equipment is in place. Drivers/Passengers Assistants do not sound their horn when they arrive. If no-one leaves the house the

transport staff will contact TAS to inform the office and leave a 'calling card' through your door which confirms that they attempted to collect the passenger that day. The vehicle will have to continue as passengers on board and those due to be collected will still need to arrive on time at their destination.

- **Parents/Carers must collect passengers from the vehicle:**  
Transport staff will assist the passenger from the vehicle. If a responsible adult is not at home to receive your child/foster child, TAS have an **Abandoned passenger policy** which they will use in this event. TAS reserves the right to suspend transport and it will only be reinstated once confirmation is received from the parent/carer that a responsible adult will be at home.
- **If you would like your child/foster child to be a keyholder** to let themselves into your home/building, TAS will require written consent from you detailing this arrangement. This authorisation will be passed on to the transport provider and noted on TAS records.
- **Make sure you/your child/foster child understands the standard of behaviour** which is expected when they are travelling to and from school/centre. Any inappropriate language and abusive, threatening or sexualised behaviour towards Transport providers, Drivers, Passenger Assistants, other passengers or TAS will not be tolerated. Any such behaviour or inappropriate language may jeopardise your/your child/foster child's transport provision.



- **Parents/Carers/You must inform TAS of any change in contact details** (mobile numbers, email address and emergency phone numbers). This ensures that TAS can keep you informed of any changes, delays, breakdowns etc that affect you/your child/foster child.
- **Parents/Carers/You are to inform TAS of any changes** in health, medical condition (e.g. Epilepsy, increased frequency of seizures, diabetes), wellbeing or behaviour which may impact on that passenger's wellbeing on transport or that of other passengers/transport staff. Whilst helpful to report these matters direct to transport staff, transport providers or school/centre, these must be logged by TAS in the first instance. Transport staff are not able to administer medication and in any medical emergency whilst on transport, staff will call 999 for emergency assistance.

### **How Schools/Centres support transport:**

- **Staff must collect passengers from the vehicle when they arrive and take passengers to the vehicle for the return journey.** Once the School/Centre member of staff has confirmed the passenger's attendance on the vehicle is correct, they sign the Transport Record (TR1/2) stating the exact time of arrival/handover. It is signed daily/per journey record.

## **Information and communication required to ensure transport arrangements run smoothly.**

For the transport service to run effectively, your support is essential.  
You can help us:

- As parents/carers you know your child/foster child best. Parents/Carers and schools/centres should offer advice and training for transport staff, where required, enabling them to successfully meet specific passenger needs e.g. calming strategies, use of communication/visual aids etc.
- The school/centre, where possible, can provide resources/materials e.g. PECS, picture cards, visual aids, etc. for identified passengers to aid transition on and off transport and for use on the journey for communication between passengers and transport staff. Parents/Carers can assist by using these with the passenger to prepare them for transition to transport.
- If you/your child/foster child is transported in a wheelchair, any changes to the wheelchair must be reported to TAS. Changes can include new wheelchairs, modifications, etc. Transport providers have been advised not to transport you/your child/foster child if changes have been made and TAS has not been notified, this is due to health and safety reasons. Passengers will not be allowed to travel in a wheelchair where there are faults; these will include faulty brakes, deflated tyres, faulty or missing foot plates etc.

- If you/your child/foster child is taken ill or needs collecting during school/centre hours, it will be your responsibility to arrange your/their collection. Transport will not be provided by TAS in this instance.
- You/Parents/Carers are to inform TAS if the passenger has been suspended/excluded from school/centre resulting in transport not being required or if the passenger does not require transport for any period of time. You should not contact the Transport provider/Driver/Passenger Assistant directly. TAS log all calls on the transport log this ensures that SMBC is not paying for unnecessary journeys.
- You/Parents/Carers are to inform TAS immediately if there are any concerns regarding transport (including safeguarding, vehicles, equipment, transport staff or other passengers) and report any transport related incident(s) as they occur. This also includes if transport has arrived early or if there is a late drop off or collection of passengers.
- Parents/Carers are to inform TAS if they will be taking/have taken their child/foster child into school/centre themselves (e.g. following a medical appointment in the morning) where a return journey on transport will be required. Parents/carers and adults should not contact the Transport provider/Driver/Passenger Assistant directly. TAS log all calls on the transport log.

- You/Parents/Carers are to inform TAS of any journey cancellations due to illness, medical appointments etc. You should not contact the Transport provider/Driver/Passenger Assistant directly. TAS log all calls on the transport log this ensures that SMBC is only paying for journeys that are necessary.
- The Transfer Record for passenger's personal items (TR4) is to be completed between you, parent/carer, transport staff and school/centre when required. This could be used for things such as letters, medication, dinner/trip money etc that specifically needs to be handed over to a responsible adult and signed for. This is a signed record and should accurately document the transfer of items. When passing on items for safe transit, these must be in a sealed envelope and clearly marked with your/your child/foster child's name and any instruction. Medicines/money **MUST NOT** be placed in your/your child/foster child's bag for them to take to school/college/centre. Any personal items taken on transport are done so at the your/parent/carers risk and the transport provider will not be responsible for any loss or damage that occurs during the journey.
- All school/college/centre bags must be clearly visible with your/your child/foster child's name displayed. This includes any clothing which can/may be removed during the journey, including coats, jumpers, cardigans, etc. Unfortunately, TAS cannot guarantee that luggage can be transported with you/your child/foster child on their vehicle if there is insufficient room or method to safely secure the item(s).

- Parents/Carers/You must inform SEN of a change of home address for the passenger as this may affect eligibility for travel assistance. TAS will action any changes when authorised by SEN.
- **TAS staff and transport staff are here to help and have the right to work without fear of abusive or aggressive behaviour. Personal, abusive and aggressive comments or gestures towards TAS or transport staff will not be tolerated.**

## Specific arrangements for Children Looked After (CLA)

- **Carers/Staff must take passengers to the vehicle** and transport staff will assist the passenger onto the vehicle, ensuring that they have their seatbelt on and any relevant safety equipment is in place. Once the Carer/member of staff has confirmed that the passenger attendance on the vehicle is correct, they are to sign the Transport Record (TR1/2) held by transport staff stating the exact time of arrival/handover. Times and dates should not be back dated or signed in advance - it must be signed daily/per journey record. This also ensures that SMBC is only paying for journeys which have taken place, that TAS can monitor the quality of the transport service and can take action where required.
- **Carers/Staff must collect passengers from the vehicle.** Once the Carer/member of staff has confirmed that the passenger attendance on the vehicle is correct, they are to sign the Transport Record (TR1/2) held by transport staff stating the exact time of arrival/handover. Times and dates should not be back dated or signed in advance - it must be signed daily/per journey record. This also ensures that SMBC is only paying for journeys which have taken place, that TAS can monitor the quality of the transport service and can take action where required.

## **Passenger Code of Conduct:**

We have written this Code of Conduct in co-production with passengers. Our aim is to ensure that all passengers are aware of the expectations of their behaviour whilst on transport provided by SMBC. This ensures that all passengers and transport staff are as safe as possible.

### **You/Your child/foster child's behaviour on the vehicle**

Whilst it is accepted that passengers with SEN may present with behaviours due to those needs, passengers and transport staff are entitled to expect a safe and stress-free journey to and from school.

Please take some time to go through these behaviour expectations with your child/foster child.

We have also included a simplified version of the behaviour expectations on the following page to ensure every one of our passengers gets the chance to take ownership of their actions and understand our expectations of their behaviour. Please take some time to read through these expectations with your child/foster child.

You must read through the code of conduct so that you know the standard of behaviour and cooperation expected of you. It is important everybody works together to ensure that each journey can be a great experience for everybody who is travelling.

1.  Always be ready for transport on time

2.  Respect the driver, passenger assistant and other passengers

3.  Remain seated and always wear a seatbelt or harness in the vehicle

4.  Respect the vehicle you travel in

5.  Always behave in a way that causes no danger or distress to other

  
passengers or staff on the vehicle


6.  Violent, abusive, bullying or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated

7.  Follow instructions from the driver and passenger assistant or other official,

  
especially in an emergency




















































8.  Never get off the vehicle before you reach your destination

9.  Do not eat or drink in the vehicle

10.  You must not smoke or use an electronic cigarette in or around any



# Simplified passenger code of conduct

1.  Always  be  ready  on time
2.  Respect  everyone  on  transport
3.  Respect  the vehicle
4.  Sit down  and  wear a  seatbelt/harness  in  the vehicle
5.  Show  good  behaviour  to  other passengers  or  staff  on  the vehicle
6.  Bad  behaviour  will not  be tolerated
7.  Follow  instructions  from  staff,  especially  in  an emergency
8.  Get off  once  you  reach  your  destination
9.  Do not eat  or drink  in  the vehicle
10.  No smoking (or vaping)  in  or  around  any vehicle

**Most passengers using the Travel Assistance Service transport will do so responsibly and safely. However, the following behaviour is not acceptable. If this behaviour occurs, you, parents/carers and schools/centres will be contacted by TAS and appropriate action will be taken:**

**1. Nuisance or offensive behaviour:** irritating and unpleasant behaviour which, whilst not necessarily a threat to safety, may significantly impact the comfort of others. This includes failing to respond to the instructions from the transport staff, eating or drinking on the vehicle, smoking, spitting, swearing, using bad/abusive/inappropriate/offensive/racist/disrespectful/name calling/bullying language or gestures.

**2. Dangerous behaviour:** behaviour which may present some potential or actual threat to the physical safety of the individual, passengers or transport staff. This includes harassing or verbally abusing others during the journey, bullying and moving from the seat.

**3. Destructive or very dangerous behaviour:** which causes or has the potential to cause physical injury to others and damage to the vehicle. This includes threatening physical violence or fighting, leaning out of the window or door/throwing things from the vehicle whilst the vehicle is moving, interfering with the opening or the windows or door, causing graffiti or damaging seats/seatbelts or other equipment.

**4. Extremely dangerous or life-threatening behaviour:** which is likely to cause serious injury to others. This includes physical assault on others, lighting fires, threatening physical violence with a dangerous weapon, interfering with the vehicle controls, interfering with passengers/transport staff seatbelts, harnesses and wheelchair clamps, personal belongings, medical equipment or throw objects around the vehicle

If the Code of Conduct is breached, TAS reserves the right to stop providing transport, either on a temporary or permanent basis (subject to investigation and at the discretion of TAS/SEN).

If you/your child/foster child's transport is stopped it will become your responsibility to transport yourself/your child/foster child to and from school/centre at your own expense.

Should any damage to the vehicle be caused by you/your child/foster child, you may be held responsible for any costs incurred in repairing or cleaning of the vehicle.

TAS operate a transport behaviour contract, where this is deemed necessary, individual arrangements will be put in place.

## **Parents/Carers acting as a Passenger Assistant for their own child(ren)**

**TAS Passenger Assistant Training** is mandatory for Passenger Assistants in paid employment. The course is designed for anyone who has care or supervision of passengers travelling in cars, taxis, Hackney carriages, minicabs, minibuses or large buses.

Parents/carers who act as Passenger Assistants on an unpaid basis would not be expected to undertake this training as a mandatory requirement, however, we advise that it is strongly recommended that you undertake this training. If this is not undertaken, Parents/Carers will be required to sign a disclaimer indemnifying SMBC against any damages, injury or issues arising from this.



# TRAVEL ASSISTANCE SERVICE

**WORKING TOGETHER**

