



Families urged to plan school travel in advance

Families are being urged to plan their travel in advance for children who are returning for the new school term.

Bus companies and Nexus will provide extra buses to get pupils to and from schools across Tyne and Wear as the new term starts.

The extra buses, supported by Government funding, are on top of normal services and dedicated home-school routes so pupils can travel in line with public health advice on Covid-19.

As parents get ready for the new school term, Nexus has provided the following advice:

- Families should plan how their children will reach schools and colleges comfortably – walking and cycling where journeys are shorter, using a car for part of the journey but dropping off away from school gates, and identifying which public transport they can use if they need to.
- There will be extra buses on many services going to or near schools, following established routes. These will include buses on busy routes so pupils can travel separately to other passengers.
- Pupils using public transport should have exact change to make their journey wherever possible.
- Anyone using public transport should follow standard public health advice – washing hands thoroughly throughout the day, wearing a face covering if aged over 11 and not exempt, and not travelling if they have symptoms of Covid-19.
- Other passengers are advised to adjust their journey times to avoid school travel times if possible.

Local authorities and Nexus have worked closely with the region's three main bus companies – Arriva, Go North East and Stagecoach – and in partnership with schools to prepare for the new term.

Martin Kearney, Chief Operating Officer at Nexus said: “We know parents will have more interest than ever in how their children get to and from school following lockdown.

“We have made extensive plans to make sure pupils can travel comfortably, providing more than 100 extra buses so pupils can travel in line with the latest public health advice on Covid-19.

“There are many ways to get to school, and young people themselves often want to travel as sustainably as possible by walking, cycling or using public transport. Where people need and choose bus and Metro they can do so with confidence.”

Martijn Gilbert, chair of the regional bus operator association; NE-Bus and managing director of Go North East, said: “Bus operators and coach companies are meeting the

challenge to provide as many extra vehicles and drivers as we can to help support social distancing and allow pupils and other passengers to travel separately.

“All our vehicles are cleaned daily with clear signage and seats adapted to help maintain distancing on board, whatever the reason you need to travel.”

Despite the provision of extra buses demand for home-school public transport is expected to be lower than in previous years, as families choose other options including walking and cycling for shorter journeys.

A dedicated web page www.nexus.org.uk/covid-secure provides more detailed information and advice for families on how to travel with confidence.

Nexus and bus operators will be meeting daily to react to demand and move vehicles around the region to respond to areas of highest demand, as well as co-ordinating with colleagues at local councils in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Northumberland.

Government funding of £1.5m was announced earlier this month for the North East Joint Transport Committee area – covering Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear. The funding covers the first six weeks of term while transport and education departments assess actual demand.

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