



## **CONTRACT SPECIFICATION**

**for providers of transport to  
Schools, Colleges and Services  
on behalf of the County Council's Children, Schools &  
Families and Adult Care Services**

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1. The Passenger Transport Unit plans and manages client transport arrangements to schools, colleges and Services on behalf of the County Council's Children, Schools & Families and Adult Care Services Departments. Transport managed by the Passenger Transport Unit is provided through contracts with private transport operators. Other service users travel on the County Council's own vehicle fleet, which is managed by County Transport Services.
2. Children, Schools & Families (CSF) provides home to school transport for pupils who meet the criteria set out in the County Council's home to school transport policy.
3. Adult Care Services (ACS) aims to provide local services for local people. The service is about enabling people to access community based activities, which takes into account individuals' changing circumstances.
4. Transport contracts will vary according to the needs of the service users and of the services themselves. The transport should reflect both the changing needs of these services and the people who use them. Transport should be flexible enough to meet the needs of the changing services and contractors are expected to adapt to meet these needs within the contract modification clause of the contract.
4. This contract specification sets out the County Council's requirements and expectations of operators providing transport services under contract. It also sets out what operators can expect from the Passenger Transport Unit.

## 2. WORKING AS A TRANSPORT CONTRACTOR FOR HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Prior to the award of a contract, operators will need to provide the County Council with an operator profile, which must cover the following points as a minimum:

1. Operator's licence
  - copy of PCV or Hackney Carriage/Private Hire Operator's licence, as appropriate
  - for taxi operators: copies of Hackney Carriage/Private Hire licences for vehicles to be used to operate contracts
  - for taxi operators: copies of Hackney Carriage/Private Hire licences for drivers to be used to operate contracts

2. Certificate(s) of vehicle insurance
  - copy/copies to be provided
3. Vehicle details
  - to be provided for vehicles used to operate contracts (vehicle type, registration number, seating capacity)
4. Employer and public liability insurance
  - copies to be provided
5. Health & Safety
  - policies to be provided (if appropriate for number of employees)
6. Equal Opportunities
  - policies to be provided
7. Risk Assessments
  - policies to be provided
8. Environmental issues
  - policies to be provided (fuel, maintenance, operational issues)
9. Staff recruitment & training
  - details of programmes to be provided
10. Vehicle maintenance programme
  - details to be provided
11. Customer care
  - contact details, hours of operation
  - complaints/liaison procedures
12. Contingency plans
  - in the event of usual vehicles and or staff not being available

### 3. HOW THE CONTRACTS SHOULD BE OPERATED

When operating contracts, operators must:

- provide safe and legal transport at all times in clean and roadworthy vehicles, thus ensuring that the services operate in an environmentally friendly way
- maintain appropriate levels of motor and public liability insurance at all times and provide details to PTU when requested. The indemnity limit for public liability insurance should be at least £5,000,000.
- treat service users with respect and understanding
- provide polite, smart, professional drivers and escorts
- provide high-visibility clothing for drivers and escorts to wear while operating the contract
- implement a no-smoking policy on vehicles at all times while operating contracts
- provide mobile telephone contact numbers to the Passenger Transport Unit and to parents/carers of clients travelling
- plan and operate routes in the most economical & effective way (i.e. service users living the furthest away to be collected first, etc.)
- contact parents/carers to notify pick-up points, times, etc and be prepared to visit service users and their families if required before transport commences
- provide the service on each day that it is required and at the times specified on the contract
- ensure that regular vehicles, drivers and escorts are used to operate contracts
- notify parents/carers and establishments about changes to drivers, escorts or vehicles to be used to operate contracts
- liaise with parents/carers and establishments concerning day to day operational issues only when there is no additional cost to the contract
- liaise with PTU for authorisation when changes to contracts incur additional costs prior to the changes being made
- liaise with PTU when passenger numbers or route mileage reduces to negotiate any price reduction to the contract
- have contingency plans in place in the event of usual vehicles and/or staff not being available and ensure that escorts used on these occasions have enhanced CRB checks
- ensure that drivers and escorts maintain a “daybook” while operating the contract and use it to record details of any accidents or other incidents
- report all accidents, complaints and incidents that occur while operating contracts to the Passenger Transport Unit (reporting form to be provided)
- notify the Passenger Transport Unit of any changes to service users addresses, travel requirements (seating, wheelchairs, etc.) and days or times of attendance

- ensure that “client information for transportation” sheets (where provided) are kept safe and secure due to their confidential nature
- if requested to do so, ensure that drivers/escorts complete a daily register of people travelling, that the list is kept up to date (as the information will be used for a number of functions within HCC) and is submitted to the service as agreed locally. If however the register is not handed in at the required frequency it will be required to be kept at the service at all times.
- provide PTU with details of vehicles, drivers and escorts used to operate each contract
- advise PTU of any changes to vehicles, drivers and escorts used to operate contracts
- properly maintain any equipment provided by PTU and return it when it is no longer required
- in emergency situations follow procedures provided by HCC
- notify parents/establishments in the event of delays to the service
- follow procedures given if parents/carers are not at home when returning a service user
- comply with the requirements of the County Council’s Code of Conduct for Home to School Transport

#### **4. VEHICLES USED TO OPERATE CONTRACTS**

- Vehicles with up to eight passenger seats
  - to comply with district or borough licensing requirements
  - London-style taxis may not be acceptable on some contracts
  - child seats to be fitted and used in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions
  - route numbers will be provided by PTU and must be displayed clearly on the vehicle at all times while operating the contract. The route number provided must be stored securely at all other times
  - hands-free mobile telephone equipment to be provided by the contractor
- Vehicles with nine or more passenger seats
  - to be PCV licensed
  - to be no more than eight years old at any time during the life of the contract
  - to have at least one nearside entrance/exit with a maximum first step height of 250mm above ground level when the vehicle is in the boarding position, which may be achieved with a folding or slide-out step or kneeling mechanism. Each subsequent step must be between 120mm and 250mm high.
  - all seats should be fitted with three-point lap and diagonal seat belts. The horizontal distance from the leading edge of the seat cushion and the seat or fixture in front must be at least 250mm

- child seats to be fitted and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
  - route numbers will be provided by PTU and must be displayed clearly on the vehicle at all times while operating the contract. The route number provided must be stored securely at all other times
  - hands-free mobile telephone equipment to be provided by the contractor
  - gangways and emergency exits to be kept clear at all times
- Wheelchair-accessible vehicles
    - to be licensed as above, as appropriate
    - wheelchair users to travel in a forward-facing position
    - London-style taxis not to be used unless specifically agreed
    - PCV licensed vehicles fitted with tail-lifts to be no more than ten years old at any time during the life of the contract
    - where fitted with power-operated passenger lifts, the lift must have a load-bearing capacity of at least 300kg and have a platform size of at least 750mm wide and 1200mm long when deployed. Passenger lifts should have colour-contrasted handrails on both sides
    - to have at least one nearside entrance/exit with a maximum first step height of 250mm above ground level when the vehicle is in the boarding position, which may be achieved with a folding or slide-out step or kneeling mechanism. Each subsequent step must be between 120mm and 250mm high.
    - all seats should be fitted with three-point lap and diagonal seat belts. The horizontal distance from the leading edge of the seat cushion and the seat or fixture in front must be at least 250mm
    - must have sufficient headroom to allow all passengers to travel in comfort
    - all wheelchairs must be appropriately restrained during transit and a separate passenger restraint for wheelchair users must be used at all times
    - contractors are expected to provide all standard wheelchair and passenger restraint equipment, the Passenger Transport Unit will provide or reimburse contractors for the provision of any more specialised equipment
    - child seats to be fitted and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
    - route numbers will be provided by PTU and must be displayed clearly on the vehicle at all times while operating the contract. The route number provided must be stored securely at all other times
    - gangways and emergency exits to be kept clear at all times
    - tail-lifts should comply with LOLER and PUWER regulations, have an annual weight test and be examined by a competent person at least every six months

- a basic daily check should be carried out on the tail-lift to ensure that it is in good working order
- hands-free mobile telephone equipment to be provided by the contractor

## **5. DRIVERS WORKING ON CONTRACTED SERVICES**

Drivers used to operate contracts must

- be in possession of an appropriate, valid licence (hackney carriage, private hire, PCV) at all times. In particular drivers of PCVs must have full category D or D1 entitlement with no restrictions. Any ID badge issued must be worn
- complete an enhanced level CRB check organised by PTU if required and wear any badge issued. Drivers will be required to attend a short interview as part of the CRB checking process
- attend training courses organised by PTU if required – any costs involved in drivers attending training courses should be included in your tender price
- work to requirements set out in “General Information for Drivers & Escorts of Hertfordshire County Council contracted transport services” booklet issued by PTU
- be able to communicate sufficiently clearly in English to be able to understand service users and make themselves understood
- carry out the duties of the escort as set out in “General Information for Drivers & Escorts of Hertfordshire County Council contracted transport services” booklet, if no escort is required on a particular contract
- only transport service users between agreed destinations, as notified by PTU
- complete a daily register of people travelling, ensure that the list is kept up to date (as the information will be used for a number of functions within HCC) and is submitted to the service as agreed locally. If however the register is not handed in at the required frequency it will be required to be kept at the service at all times
- wear high-visibility clothing whilst on duty
- drivers must not be related to any of the passengers travelling on the service or to the escort

## **6. ESCORTS WORKING ON CONTRACTED SERVICES**

Escorts working on contracts must

- complete an enhanced level CRB check organised by PTU before starting work. Escorts will be required to attend a short interview as part of the CRB checking process
- attend training courses organised by PTU if required – any costs involved in escorts attending training courses should be included in your tender price

- wear ID badge issued by PTU at all times whilst on duty
- wear high-visibility clothing whilst on duty
- work to requirements set out in “General Information for Drivers & Escorts of Hertfordshire County Council contracted transport services” booklet issued by PTU
- be able to communicate sufficiently clearly in English to be able to understand service users and make themselves understood
- escort service users to and from handover points at establishments and at home addresses, as agreed with establishment staff
- on some contracts, escorts may need training in particular procedures or techniques, which will be organised by PTU
- support service users as suggested on the “client information for transportation” sheets (where provided) and keep this information secure due to its confidential nature
- pass on information to staff in services on a daily basis, i.e. if a service user is carrying medication or if there have been problems/changes noticed with individuals on the transport
- escorts must not be related to any of the passengers travelling on the service or to the driver
- carefully supervise passengers while they are boarding and alighting from the vehicle. You should remain with the vehicle and are not expected to collect passengers from home or to help them across the road. This is the responsibility of parents/carers.
- if a passenger is normally met by a parent/carer at the set-down point and the appropriate person has not arrived, wait up to five minutes. After that time notify your employer, keep the passenger on the vehicle and continue with the rest of the route before returning to the set-down point. If the parent/carer still has not arrived, contact your employer again, who will be able to provide appropriate advice.

## **7. THE ROLE OF THE PASSENGER TRANSPORT UNIT**

The Passenger Transport Unit will

- plan and manage contracts in line with the County Council’s client transport policies
- provide contractors with accurate relevant information about service users to be transported, including
  - name, address & telephone number
  - dates, times and destinations of travel
  - details of any special requirements or special equipment required
  - details of behavioural issues or any other issues relevant to transport

- initial daily register of people travelling on journey for the contractor to complete. PTU will update this register as required (day service contracts only)
- provide or re-imburse contractors for the provision of any specialist equipment required (PTU retain ownership)
- carry out enhanced level CRB checks on drivers and escorts and issue ID badges when this process is complete
- organise training courses which drivers and escorts will be required to attend
- provide copies of “General Information for Drivers & Escorts of Hertfordshire County Council contracted transport services” booklet
- organise any more specialised training that drivers or escorts may require on some contracts
- actively encourage contractors to provide additional training or awareness to their staff
- investigate any complaints received about the operation of the service (in the event of complaints that are considered as child or vulnerable adult protection matters, PTU will instruct contractors not to use the driver/escort concerned on any contract service while the investigation takes place)
- provide contractors with a copy of the County Council’s Code of Conduct for home to school transport services
- provide details of the County Council’s child and vulnerable adult protection procedures
- provide details of the County Council’s customer care policies and complaints procedures
- provide guidance and assistance on managing poor passenger behaviour
- provide contractors with relevant information such as school term dates, start and finish times, etc. This information may be made available to contractors via the County Council’s website.
- provide contractors with details of the information to be provided on an invoice
- pay contractors’ invoices each calendar month within 28 days of receipt of a correct invoice
- if a contract price increases without agreement, PTU will not pay the additional charge
- provide at least 48 hours notice of days when the service is not required. If the required amount of notice is given, no payment will be made for days when the service is not required
- give parents/carers details of the transport arrangements that have been made
- provide details of procedure to be followed if parents/carers are not at home when a client is returned
- monitor and enforce the contracts and service specification

## **8. THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES & DAY SERVICES**

Schools, colleges and day services will

- provide agreed hand-over point close to establishment entrance (in line with DfES guidance)
- establishment staff will make themselves available for the handover of service users as agreed locally
- establishment staff will provide information needed on individuals (client information for transportation sheet) which should include how to work with an individual and what support a person needs to encourage independence
- establishment staff will ensure parents/carers are aware that they should inform drivers/escorts if medication is to be carried and that it should be in its original packaging
- establishment staff will report to PTU when contractors are not complying with the contract specification if it cannot be dealt with locally. When this is needed establishments should provide PTU with any background information
- liaise with providers concerning day to day operational issues only when there is no additional cost to the contract
- establishments will provide a named worker for contractors to liaise with on a day to day basis
- establishments will inform PTU & Contractors about service closures

## **9. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT**

PTU will plan, tender and manage contract in accordance with the following principles:

- HCC transport policies
- contracts will be awarded for a defined period but will be reviewed regularly and may need to be amended or terminated at any time in order to ensure the continued provision of an efficient, high-quality and cost-effective service
- if a contract price increases without agreement, PTU will not pay the additional charge
- where possible, service users should not travel for more than 45 minutes (junior school pupils) or 75 minutes (secondary school and college students, adults)
- quality issues may be taken into account as well as cost when evaluating tenders and awarding contracts
- service mileage provided by the contractor on the tender form or calculated by PTU from the original tender will be used to calculate any price changes

- the minimum size of vehicle to be used to operate the contract will be specified on the tender
- contract warnings will be issued in cases of poor performance, such as failure to operate, poor timekeeping, failure to provide an escort, failure to report an accident or other serious incident
- contracts may be terminated immediately in exceptional cases, such as operating without an appropriate licence or involvement in a serious incident, or in cases where a number of previous warnings have been given
- PTU reserves the right to monitor driver and escort performance and to instruct contractors not to use named people as drivers or escorts on contracted services
- PTU reserves the right to carry out additional checks on contractors' vehicles and to instruct contractors not to use certain identified vehicles to operate contracted services
- PTU will monitor and enforce contracts, in partnership with other agencies such as the police, district & borough licensing and enforcement staff, VOSA inspectors, etc.

## **10. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE**

Contractors will be expected to produce a quality plan setting out how they intend to improve the quality of the service provided throughout the life of the contract. The Quality Plan could include:

- details of how the service will be provided
- names and contact details of staff to be involved in providing the service
- training and continuing development of staff involved in providing the service
- proposals to improve the quality of vehicles used to operate the contract
- minimum standards to be achieved in operating the contract and how these will be measured
- how performance will be measured, monitored and improved
- how improvements will be planned and achieved
- procedures for resolving problems and disputes
- responses to changes in demand (such as passengers joining or leaving the contract, larger or smaller vehicle being required, changes in passengers' needs)

## **11. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Our environmental policy is a statement of our intentions and principles in relation to the overall environmental performance of the services that we provide. This, together with the county council promises and our service planning process, provides us with the framework for action

and setting of environmental objectives and targets to meet our commitment for continual improvement and to make Hertfordshire a more sustainable place.

*The Environment Department is committed to continued environmental improvement and will manage this through an environmental management system (EMS). It will assess its significant environmental impacts and address them through the department's Service Planning framework. Recognising the range of activities that the Environment Department manages we will take direct action to improve the sustainability of Hertfordshire by: -*

- examining the consumption of energy, water, resources and materials, the purchasing arrangements, waste and transport associated with our key strategies, policies and actions;*
- protecting, preserving and enhancing the natural resources and built environment of Hertfordshire.*

*The main principles, applied within financial and resource constraints, include:*

- complying with all relevant environment legislation, regulations and other requirements to which the department subscribes;*
- conducting environmental appraisals of options being considered in the development and review of strategies and policies;*
- adopting practices which promote continued environmental and operational improvement for the maintenance of the county's assets under our care;*
- adopting the principle of contract compliance to secure continued environmental improvement for contractors and partners involved in the implementation of County Council policies;*
- providing the public with easy access to timely, accurate and useful environmental information, including the monitoring of key indicators, and identifying a mechanism for feedback to be easily provided.*

*This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary, to reflect achievements and changing needs.*

## **12. HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The County Council is committed to listening to service users and dealing with any complaints they may have promptly and effectively. We aim to learn from your views, helping us to improve and develop the services we provide.

This procedure is for members of the public who are not happy with the service they have received from us or the conduct of a member of staff.

If you have a complaint please speak first to the person you have been dealing with. If you feel they cannot help, or if you are not satisfied with the answers they give, get in touch with their manager

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the (lack of) council action or standard of a service, whether provided by the council itself or a person/contractor acting on behalf of the council.

A complaint may arise if we have:

- made a mistake
- failed to do something we should have done
- acted unfairly or unreasonably
- acted unlawfully

There are three common stages when dealing with a complaint.

### **STAGE ONE: The Informal Stage**

Initially discuss your complaint with the member of staff with whom you have been dealing. If you feel they cannot help, or if you are not satisfied with the answers given, contact their manager. If the issue has not been resolved you will be advised how to make a formal (stage two) complaint. This process will be set out within specific complaints procedures.

### **STAGE TWO: The Formal Stage**

Complaints are dealt with by each Department and should be made directly to the Departmental complaints team -

If you are unhappy with the response your complaint moves to the Review Stage (Stage Three).

### **STAGE 3: Review Stage**

The County Secretary is Hertfordshire County Council senior legal officer and is responsible for carrying out most reviews.

Complaints are only dealt with by the County Secretary if stages one and two have failed to resolve the complaint.

Social care complaints made under the respective statutory care proceedings are reviewed by a Panel with an Independent Chair.