To whom it may concern

**Long Covid Kids School Travel Assistance**

Children and young people with Long Covid (also known as Post Covid Condition/Syndrome) experience a range of symptoms that affect their ability to do daily activities. In many cases Long Covid can be thought of as an energy limiting chronic illness. Many have remained unwell for over 12 months meaning that their condition is likely to fall under the protections of the Equality Act. Although we

would urge the support outlined below to be implemented for those at any stage, particularly as we are aware that over-exertion in the acute stages of illness can

lead to longer term difficulties.

One of the defining features of Long Covid is the experience of Post Exertional Symptom Exacerbation – whereby increasing activity levels (physical, cognitive, social or sensory) coincides with a worsening of each individual’s symptom profile. Please note that sensory overstimulation (to noise, light, temperature) is common and this may preclude standard school transportation such as trains and buses.

As such, Long Covid Kids is promoting the use of extended and gradual phased returns to school and, in some cases, a permanent reduction to attendance timetables. This will leave some children and young people unable to attend full school days and means that they may have an increased need to travel at non- standard times.

Managing limited energy with a chronic illness demands a careful balancing act and, whilst these children and young people may on the outside appear to be physically capable of walking to school, the energy that this would use would then leave them unable to concentrate on their education. They would also be at risk of not being able to demonstrate, or fulfil, their academic potential. Some of these children may be ambulatory wheelchair users (this means they can walk at times, but that their ability to do so fluctuates and can cost them too much energy). Particularly when a child’s journey to school takes a long time, they will need this journey to be as stress free as possible so that they arrive to school in a state of readiness to learn, and after a tiring day, have somewhere quiet to rest.

We would urge travel assistance teams to consider personal budgets, where appropriate, for these students and to review this provision regularly and flexibly.

It may mean the difference between whether they are able to attend school face to face or not. Another key feature of Long Covid is its relapsing and remitting nature which means that support needs fluctuate over time.

Supporting the provision of taxis, or providing funding for parents to drop off and collect (where their employment or health status enables them to do this) would be two key adjustments that we would anticipate being helpful in some cases.

If you need further information on this individual’s symptom profile or needs please refer to any supporting medical evidence or consider supporting them to access review by health or social care professionals who are used to assessing those with complex chronic conditions (such as occupational or physiotherapists). Access to medical support for those with Long Covid has been sporadic so they may not have had the formal assessments necessary to provide the needed evidence.

We hope that this letter has provided you with useful supporting information. Please do visit our website for further guidance. This letter is provided as part of our Long Covid Kids Support Pack.

**Kirsty Stanley**

Long Covid Kids Occupational Therapist

**Long Covid Kids** believe all children should be able to thrive and look forward to a positive future. That is why we represent and support children and young people living with Long Covid and related illnesses and the parents and caregivers that look after them.