

# Oldham Group Motion (AMENDMENT)

## Provision of Free School Travel for All Children in Temporary Accommodation

**Proposer:** Councillor Ghafoor

**Seconded:** Councillor Wahid

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### 1. Reason for Motion

To ensure that children living in temporary accommodation (TA) in Oldham are not disadvantaged by their housing situation and can maintain stability in education.

*“No child should be punished for their family’s housing situation.”*

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### 2. Background (Latest Facts)

#### Oldham picture

- At **31 March 2025**, there were **562 households** in temporary accommodation in Oldham (Table TA4).
- In **Q1 2025 (Jan–Mar)** there were **310 households with children (748 children aged 0–18)** in TA (most recently published government data).
- TA is intended to be short-term (around **six weeks**), but Oldham data show many households remain **beyond 6 months** across B&B and nightly-paid placements.
- Composition (Oldham, 31 Mar 2025):
  - **B&B:** 173 households (includes cases >6 months).
  - **Nightly paid, self-contained:** 259 households (many **6–12 months** and **1–2 years**).
  - **Hostels:** 5 | **Private sector leased:** 87 | **LA/HA stock:** 38.

#### National/GM context

- **England total:** 131,140 households in TA (31 Mar 2025).
- Statutory free school travel where:
  - **>2 miles** (under 8) or **>3 miles** (8+), or
  - **no safe walking route**, or
  - **SEND/disability/mobility** prevents walking.
- Locally, children with an **EHC Plan** are supported from a SEN perspective and continue to receive travel assistance where already in place.

- **GM practice:** families in **paid nightly TA** in another GM borough may apply for bus passes from the **host borough**, but only if they meet **standard distance criteria**—leaving a gap for many placed nearer than mileage thresholds yet far from their original school.
- **Political momentum:** the *Manchester Evening News* campaign calls for free bus passes for children in TA **>30 minutes' walk** from school. As of **25 Aug 2025**, **six GM MPs** publicly back the campaign. **No GM local authority** has yet adopted a borough-wide concession.

#### **Why discretionary action is needed**

Children rehoused (often suddenly) can face long, complex and costly journeys to their existing school—leading to **lateness, absence and stress**. The statutory mileage rules **do not cover many TA cases**; discretionary support is therefore required to protect educational continuity.

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### **3. Current Position in Oldham**

Oldham complies with national transport duties and supports pupils eligible under **distance/safety/SEND** criteria. Children in TA who fall short of mileage thresholds (or are rehoused across GM) face a **policy gap**. Acting now would make Oldham the **first GM authority** to introduce a dedicated concession for children in TA.

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### **4. Proposal (Re-ordered to comply with Budget & Policy Framework)**

**This Council resolves:**

1. **To request the Cabinet** to bring forward, within **12 weeks**, a report setting out **options** to improve access to school for children in TA, including (but not limited to):
  - The feasibility of **extending free school travel** (bus pass and/or taxi) to children in TA irrespective of mileage thresholds;
  - Eligibility definitions based on **verified TA status** (including placements within and across GM);
  - Delivery models (**bus passes, pre-approved taxi contracts**, or hybrid), with clear **safeguarding standards**;
  - **Legal, financial and equality** implications (including Section 149 Equality Act assessment);
  - **Funding options** (e.g. Homelessness Prevention funding, partnership with **TfGM** and operators, and targeted charitable/hardship support);
  - An **implementation timetable** (including scope for a time-limited **pilot**).
2. **That no decision to implement** any new concession is taken **until** Cabinet (or Council where required) has considered the report and **identified funding**

in line with the **Financial Procedure Rules** and the **agreed budget/MTFP** (or approved virement/other lawful funding mechanism).

3. **Subject to** such approval and funding being identified, to **proceed to implement** the preferred option, ensuring alignment with existing **SEND/EHC** travel assistance so support is continuous where already in place.
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## 5. Additional Resolution

This Council further resolves to:

- **Call on Oldham's two Members of Parliament** to publicly support the campaign for free school travel for children in TA across Greater Manchester; and
  - **Urge the Mayor of Greater Manchester** to introduce a **region-wide** scheme that guarantees free transport for children in TA, ensuring no child is penalised for their family's housing situation.
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## 6. Expected Outcomes

- **Improved attendance and punctuality** for children in TA.
  - **Educational continuity and wellbeing** during periods of acute housing instability.
  - **Oldham leadership** in closing a known policy gap ahead of GM peers.
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## 7. Recommendation

That Council adopts this amended motion and refers it to **Cabinet** for the options report and subsequent decision in line with budgetary and constitutional requirements.