

Oldham Group Motion (AMENDMENT)

Provision of Free School Travel for All Children in Temporary Accommodation

Proposer: Councillor Ghafoor

Seconded: Councillor Wahid

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.”

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.

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.

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.