

# BUS SERVICE OPERATORS GRANT

REVISED

## GUIDANCE FOR BUS OPERATORS RUNNING SERVICES SERVING SCHOOLS AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

### OVERVIEW

This guidance is intended to help operators identify whether they can claim BSOG for services that carry staff and pupils to schools. While commercial bus operators cannot claim BSOG for “closed” school services, there are instances when services that serve schools are eligible for BSOG.

We have previously issued guidance about school services, but we are aware of past instances where operators were claiming Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) for “closed” services which only the pupils and staff of schools were able to board. We still receive lots of queries about this and checking individual claims, which can delay BSOG payments.

We recognise that operators want greater certainty as to whether services that serve schools are likely to be eligible for BSOG, and what evidence they need to provide to DfT to support their claims.

From 1 September 2018 we provided operators with guidance on eligibility of school services following consultation with DfT officials, bus operators, local authority representatives, auditors, claims compilers and the Confederation of Passenger Transport. The revised 2024 guidance below is intended to enhance the 2018 guidance and give more detail to assist operators.

The Department may withhold whatever percentage of an operator's quarterly payments they consider appropriate, including complete withdrawal of quarterly payments on estimate, and may seek to recover any monies paid on estimate where:

- a) estimates appear unreasonably high in view of the operator's performance in recent years.
- b) an operator consistently over-estimates.
- c) an operator fails to submit a certified claim (PSV311E) within the time allowed.

The Secretary of State may withhold payment of BSOG completely where:

- d) records in support of operators' claims (see paragraph 26 of Annex A of BSOG terms and conditions) are not held or are incomplete.
- e) operators have not informed the Department of any change in circumstances, eg cancellation of services, which was not foreseen at the time the estimate on form PSV310 was submitted, and which has had a material effect on the amount of grant due (see paragraph 14 of Annex A of BSOG terms and conditions).
- f) operators have previously provided false information or misled the Department.
- g) operators have themselves, or in connection with others, been accepted onto the BSOG scheme in the past and have left the scheme owing the Department money.
- h) the Department has reason to believe that the claimant has not complied with any condition imposed by the Secretary of State under section 154(3) of the Transport Act 2000 (see this Annex A) and/or if any of the services to which the claim related is not an eligible bus service within the meaning given by section 154(5) of the Transport Act 2000 (see the following Annex B).
- i) The Secretary of State may adjust overpayments or underpayments by whatever means he/she considers appropriate. The Secretary of State may also carry out credit checks on operators where he/she considers this to be appropriate.

We require operators to abide by the criteria set out below:

- a) Details of services serving schools, but that are also **open to the general public**, must be provided by bus operators to the local authority to ensure they appear on [Traveline](#)

You may find it helpful to refer to the below definition of a “closed” service:

A ‘closed door’ home-to-school service is a service providing travel to and from a school or other educational establishment that can be used only by:

- a person receiving primary, secondary or further education or training at the school or educational establishment
- a person supervising or escorting any such person while they are using the service
- a person involved with the provision of education or training at that school or educational establishment.

This includes:

- Services commissioned by local authorities, whether or not the service is provided free of charge
- Services commissioned by schools or other educational establishments
- Services provided by transport operators (commercial travel routes) which cannot be boarded by members of the public at the same time as they are carrying children or young people to their place of education.

**Note:** It is the operators’ responsibility to check that eligible open services are correctly shown on the main Traveline website

- b) Normal stopping services that happen to serve schools and that are open to the general public should also appear in the bus operators’ own Journey Planners and in local authority Journey Planners where they have a Journey Planner separate to Traveline.
- c) Operators’ web sites and other literature such as timetables / fare tables may indicate that a service serves a school or college, but **it must be made explicitly clear** on such literature that it is also open to members of the general public. Operators should therefore take steps to remove any material that may imply that it is a restricted (closed) school service.
- d) The BSOG team will not accept services registered as “schools or works services.” Services that happen to serve schools and that are open to the general public must be registered with the Office of the Traffic Commissioner as a “normal stopping service”. If the Traffic Commissioners’ information is out of date the onus is on the operator to ensure it is updated correctly.

- e) If the registration of a service is incorrectly shown as “school or works” the BSOG team will accept a copy of the PSV355 for an existing service or PSV350 for a newly registered service as proof of an error by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner. This can be sent to the team at the main email address **BSOG@dft.gov.uk**. **Operators must not include any financial data when submitting this information to the team.**

**Note:** The onus remains on the operator to ensure that the error is rectified. Failure to do so may result in services being removed from the claim and the overall payment reduced or stopped.

- f) When completing the Certified claim form PSV311E or Estimate claim form PSV310, operators providing eligible (open) school services must complete the declaration at Section 2) iv) of the claim form to show details of all eligible school services. The same service information will need to be entered at Section 5 of the claim form.
- g) Any boarding and alighting restrictions should not act as a deterrent to use by the general public on the element of a service for which BSOG is claimed.
- h) If part of a route runs within school grounds and is therefore out of bounds to the general public, eligibility would cease from the last stop before the school to the first stop after. In such circumstances operators should provide a copy of the map sent to the Traffic Commissioner when registering the service outlining which part of the route is closed so that the BSOG team can accurately check non-eligible mileage.
- i) Where doubt around eligibility still remains, the Department may request a bus boarding exercise is undertaken by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency.