



[REDACTED]  
**Minister for School Standards**

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Ms Katy Skerrett  
His Majesty's Senior Coroner for Gloucestershire  
By email: [REDACTED]

23 September 2024

Dear Ms Skerrett,

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education in response to the Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths, issued on 29 July 2024, concerning the death of Laramah Grace Scarlett on 24 September 2021. I am responsible for the government's policy on home-to-school travel.

I was deeply saddened to learn of Laramah's death. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to her family. The government's home-to-school travel policy aims to make sure no child is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport. Local authorities have a duty to arrange free travel for eligible children. To meet that duty, the travel they arrange must be suitable for the needs of the child concerned. I share your concern that, on this occasion, there do not seem to have been suitable arrangements in place to keep Laramah safe on her journey home from school.

Officials at the Department for Education have contacted Gloucestershire County Council about Laramah's case. I understand that the Council ensures children travelling on home-to-school transport have a 'personal safety plan' and that Laramah's plan included details of her condition, the signs and symptoms to watch out for, and how to respond to those symptoms. The Council makes it a condition of its contracts with transport operators that all members of the transport crew for each child have read their personal safety plan. At the time of Laramah's death, it was also a condition that at least one member of the crew had undertaken first aid training. It is now a condition that all members of the crew must undertake first aid training.

The Council has advised that, in Laramah's case, the transport operator had failed to comply with both these conditions. The Council says it already had robust procedures in place for ensuring children's safety and monitoring operators' performance and that, since the inquest, they have enhanced their checks on transport operators and are reviewing their training for passenger assistants. They

have also terminated all contracts with the operator responsible for Laramah's transport.

The Department for Education publishes statutory guidance to assist local authorities in meeting their home-to-school transport duty. The latest version of the guidance was published in 2023 and includes much more comprehensive guidance about meeting a child's needs than the version that was available at the time of Laramah's death. It is available here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance). I believe it goes a long way to addressing the concerns you have raised in this case. In particular, it recommends that drivers and passenger assistants are trained in basic life support skills. It expects local authorities to conduct risk assessments, to consider how a child's medical needs might affect them during their journey, and to put in place proportionate arrangements to manage those needs. It also requires them to ensure that a child's driver and passenger assistant are aware of their needs and how to respond to them, that they have received any training they need to be able to do so, and that they are trained in (amongst other things) the handling of emergency situations.

Further work is underway in the Department to support local authorities in arranging suitable travel for all children. For example, officials hold bi-monthly meetings to which all local authority school travel officers are invited to seek advice from one another and the Department and to share best practice. Officials are drafting non-statutory guidance to support better partnership working within local authorities (i.e. between SEND caseworkers and school travel officers) and beyond (i.e. between authorities and schools, parents and health professionals) to better meet children's needs. I expect this piece of guidance to be available later this year or early next year. Officials will keep Laramah's case in mind as they continue to work on it.

Thank you for bringing this important matter to my attention and for giving me the opportunity to respond.

Yours,

  
**Minister for School Standards**