# Operational Policy: Use of Vehicles by BLENNZ Staff (NAG 4)

## Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ

(Amalgamated with OP4-13 BLENNZ Vehicles)

## Statement of Intent:

The Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) will ensure that wherever possible staff who require vehicles to carry out their work will be provided with a vehicle which is owned, leased or rented by BLENNZ (a “BLENNZ vehicle”). Such vehicles must not be used for personal travel. Personal travel includes commuting to or from the employee’s home to their BLENNZ office or to the relevant vehicle collection point.

Where a leased vehicle is not fiscally viable the most appropriate and cost effective alternative will be identified.

The use of leased vehicles will be regularly reviewed to ensure effective and fair use of the leased pool. Prioritised use of leased vehicles will be based on distance travelled between the base and ākonga, frequency of use and associated cost.

All BLENNZ owned or leased vehicles are “pool” vehicles.

BLENNZ decisions in relation to this policy will take into account:

1. The needs of ākonga.
2. The safety and wellbeing of staff.
3. The financial and other costs to BLENNZ.
4. Fairness and reasonableness.

This policy does not supersede terms and conditions of Collective Employment Agreements.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the BLENNZ Safe Driving Policy.

## Policy Requirements:

1. BLENNZ vehicles are to be used for work purposes only unless specific approval has been received from the relevant Senior Manager or Principal. For the avoidance of doubt, “work purposes” does not include commuting to or from the employee’s home to their BLENNZ office space or to the relevant vehicle collection point. Vehicles are not part of a salary package for any BLENNZ staff, thus the following should not influence decisions in terms of the use of vehicles:

* Historical use
* Status or position
* Personal mileage between base and home when determining km travelled.

2. In the case of an itinerating staff member, BLENNZ vehicles must be used for itinerating purposes only. Unless prior approval has been received, BLENNZ vehicles must not be used for travel:

* To and from home when working at their respective BLENNZ office rather than itinerating to schools
* To attend professional development days at their base
* All day meetings or office days at their base.

This is to ensure equity with non-itinerating staff who use their own vehicles to travel to and from work.

3. Unless otherwise approved, and under exceptional one-off and not regular circumstances, BLENNZ vehicles must be collected from the vehicle collection point at the beginning of the day’s work and returned to the vehicle collection point at the end of the day’s work. BLENNZ vehicle collection points are defined as:

* Homai Campus
* Visual or Sensory Resource Centres
* Identified storage bases as approved by BLENNZ Senior Management.

4. Every effort will be made to provide a BLENNZ vehicle when required. However where the use of a BLENNZ vehicle is not reasonably practicable, and the request is made in advance, the relevant line manager will authorise the reimbursement for the costs of mileage for the use of the staff member’s privately-owned vehicle. For the avoidance of doubt, this will exclude mileage commuting to or from the employee’s home to their BLENNZ office. Thus the regular kilometres travelled from home to the office base must be deducted from the daily claim e.g. if travel from home to office is 10km, then 20 km must be deducted from any daily travel claimed.

5. Mileage when using a personal car can be claimed according to the rate in the appropriate Collective Employment Agreement. Parking fees can be claimed for work related activities.

6. From time to time a Senior Manager may approve the use of a rental vehicle.

7. Staff who use BLENNZ vehicles must:

* hold a current, appropriate, full NZ Drivers Licence and provide a photocopy of this to BLENNZ. Staff holding a restricted or learner’s license are not permitted to drive any BLENNZ vehicle.
* notify BLENNZ of any restrictions or changes to their license which may affect acceptance of insurance claims.
* not drink alcohol, or be effected by alcohol, prescription or non-prescription drugs while using a BLENNZ vehicle.
* notify BLENNZ of anything that would / could impact on their ability to drive safely.
* not smoke or vape in a BLENNZ vehicle.
* notify BLENNZ of any accident or damage involving the vehicle or anything which could affect the maintenance and/or repair of the vehicle.
* pay the costs of any traffic or parking infringements.
* exercise reasonable care and responsibility in relation to maintenance, repair and cleanliness of the BLENNZ vehicle.
* Ensure they have clear visibility through windows before driving the vehicle. This includes ensuring windows are completely de-fogged or de-iced.

8. BLENNZ vehicles will be managed in accordance with a “pool” booking system. The pooling of vehicles is essential to maximise the efficient use of vehicles. Vehicles will be allocated to teams as fairly and reasonably as possible. Wherever possible a pool vehicle will be made available to members of the BLENNZ Leadership Team or Senior Management Team on a fiscally responsible basis. The exception to this would be when vehicles were required to transport ākonga. The transportation of ākonga will always take precedent over other needs. If a pool car is not available travel will be provided by use of reimbursement of mileage or rental vehicles, whichever is the most cost effective. All vehicles will be regarded as pool vehicles when parked at the respective base for any length of time during the day.

9. Vehicles need to be managed to ensure efficient use of all vehicles based on the following principles:

* Management is based on what is fair and reasonable
* Longer/out of town journeys take precedence over shorter local travel, with the exception being the transportation of ākonga which will always take precedence.
* The decision to book a vehicle for more than a day will take into account mileage, cost and the requirements of the role.

10. If a BLENNZ vehicle is available and a staff member wishes to use their own vehicle, vehicle mileage will not usually be reimbused unless prior approval has been received from a Senior Manager. Any decision must be fiscally responsible.

11. Monthly mileage sheets need to be completed and places visited recorded. These must be checked by the appropriate manager and then forwarded to the appropriate BLENNZ support person.

12. Mileage of regional vehicles should be monitored by the appropriate manager and if possible vehicles exchanged to ensure kilometres are kept within the agreed lease allowances. Through this monitoring process Managers will identify the need to increase or decrease the number of vehicles in the region. When this occurs a recommendation needs to be made to the Senior Management Team. This will include supporting information which highlights the relative costs of lease, mileage claim and rental if appropriate.

13. Mileage across the national fleet will be monitored and vehicles exchanged across regions where required to ensure allowances within lease agreements are honoured.

14. Managers, assisted by administration staff, will ensure processes are in place to ensure:

* BLENNZ abides by the Master Motor Vehicle Lease Agreement and will keep and maintain the vehicle in good working order, repair and condition and neither abuse or misuse the vehicle.
* All maintenance and repairs are carried out in accordance with the highest standards of good workmanship and the manufacturer’s requirements.
* Regular washing and polishing of the vehicle and that it is kept safely and securely parked when not in use.

15. All staff are responsible for ensuring no valuable equipment or working documents relating to ākonga are left in the car overnight. During the day these items should be placed out of sight in the vehicle’s boot.

16. Visual Resource Centres Managers, with the assistance of administration staff, are responsible for ensuring that regular servicing of vehicles used by their staff is carried out and that current Warrant of Fitness and Registration stickers are displayed at all times. BLENNZ vehicles used by the Homai Campus School are the responsibility of the Site Manager.

17. If a staff member is issued with a replacement registration sticker and they fail to display it in the vehicle and the vehicle is stopped and a fine issued, that fine is payable by the staff member.

18. Any vehicle infringement notices, including parking fines and wheel clamping, are the personal cost of the driver and are to be paid by the driver by the due date. Any fees incurred for late payment are also the responsibility of the driver.

19. BLENNZ vehicles may only be driven by staff of BLENNZ. Exceptions to this include:

* Non BLENNZ staff required to drive a vehicle in an emergency must be approved by the appropriate BLENNZ Manager and wherever possible, a license sighted;
* Where special permission has been given by a member of the Senior Management Team and license sited.

20. Training, if required, will be offered in the use of BLENNZ vans. Training is essential for those using wheelchair accessible vehicles.

21. Drivers and passengers must wear a seat belt. Requirements for child restraints are as follows:

| **Age of child** | **The law says you must** |
| --- | --- |
| Until their 7th birthday | Correctly secure the child in an approved child restraint |
| From their 7th to their 8th birthday | Correctly secure the child in an approved child restraint if one is available in the vehicle (and if not, in any child restraint or safety belt that is available) |
| From 8th birthday to 14 years old | Must use safety belts if available. If not available, they must travel in the back seat. (NB: whilst this is the law, it is BLENNZ policy that all ākonga be transported in the back of any vehicle being used and they must use seat belts. They must not be transported in a vehicle without seat belts.) |
| Over 14 years old | Must use safety belts where they are available. |

 International best practice recommendations should also be considered when using child restraints. This practice recommends the use of an appropriate child restraint (or booster seat) until the child reaches 148cm tall or is 11 years old. Child restraint and medical professionals recommend that babies be in a rear-facing restraint until as old as practicable, at least until they are 2 years of age.

22. When transporting ākonga in BLENNZ vehicles whilst undertaking BLENNZ duties, written permission will be obtained from parents/caregivers using the appropriate forms.

23. Vehicles must not be used to transport family, friends or extended whānau without the permission of the appropriate Co-ordinator or Senior Manager. If a BLENNZ vehicle is required to be used in an emergency situation information pertaining to the reason for this should be provided to the appropriate Co-ordinator or Senior Manager as soon as possible after the emergency situation has been resolved.

24. Petrol for BLENNZ vehicles should be purchased using the appropriate Fuel Card. Petrol purchases should be recorded on the mileage sheet and receipts attached to the mileage sheets and handed in each month. All vehicles must be returned with the petrol tank at least half full.

25. All drivers are responsible for monitoring the vehicle they are driving and should inspect the vehicle after use in case damage has occurred without the driver’s knowledge. Any damage should be reported to the appropriate manager immediately. Wherever possible vehicle repairs to lease vehicles are to be carried out within the school term that the damage has occurred. Approval must be sought for vehicle repairs to be delayed to a later date.

26. BLENNZ staff may be required to fly in the course of their duties. In determining travel between airport and home, the most fiscally appropriate approach must be identified, taking into consideration:

* The distance between the airport and the office/base: if the trip to the airport is longer claim the difference. If the trip is shorter, claim nothing.
* The cost of a taxi versus the cost of mileage (if any) and parking.
* Leased or BLENNZ owned vehicles should not be left parked at airports, rather they should be available for others to use.

## Supporting Documents:

[Link to NZTA Government website - Using Child Restraints in New Zealand](https://www.nzta.govt.nz/safety/vehicle-safety/safety-belts-and-restraints/child-restraints/using-child-restraints-in-new-zealand/)

BLENNZ Operational Policy: Transportation of Ākonga in BLENNZ Vehicles

Approved: 

Date: 8 February 2023 Next Review: 2025