

Support for travel from home to education or training for children and young people aged 5-to-16 and over-16s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

We've reviewed this policy and would welcome your comments before finalising it.

The consultation is open from 1 September 2022 until 10 October 2022. Anyone with an interest can comment.

Current Policy

We currently have one policy, launched in 2015, covering transport support for 5–16 year-olds, and for over-16s.

Our policy sets out parental and Council responsibilities and is based on clear principles:

- Independence
- Inclusive opportunities for independent travel or family-based approaches
- Sustainable, safe, healthy and appropriate travel choice
- Equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity
- Efficient use of public resources – better outcomes and better value for money

Main proposed changes we'd like your views on:

- You wouldn't have to re-apply every year.
- More emphasis on reviewing travel support at key points in a young person's education, such as starting secondary school.
- Better support from 'passenger assistants'.
- Separate rules for 5–16-year-olds and over-16s.
- Switching from 5–16 rules to over-16s rules.
- More travel solutions in future, including 'walking buses' and bikes.
- We've clarified grey areas like the 'exceptional circumstances' that affect any support we give.

We would apply the new rules:

- for new applicants in the current academic year (once they are agreed).
- to pupils starting Reception, Year 7, Year 12, Year 14 or Year 16 next academic year 2023/24.
- when your circumstances change or at 'transition points' in the child's school life.

Summary of relevant parts of the reviewed policy and what we're asking:

- Which of the travel options we could offer are better than what you have now, if relevant, and which options should we offer?

Travel solutions offered

Bicycle – a one-off payment for a bike with training if needed.

Walking bus – several pupils walking to and from school with a 'passenger assistant'.

Travel pass – free public transport for a pupil and any parent, carer or 'travel buddy'.

Supported public transport – we provide someone to support pupils to use public transport. It could be a passenger assistant, befriending service or 'travel buddy'.

Personal travel budget – paid to you to spend on flexible options such as family-based solutions, mileage, or a befriending service.

Driving lessons – students aged 16 and over who have applied for the enhanced rate mobility component of PIP (Personal Independence Payment) can drive. We fund lessons if we decide it's the most cost-efficient option.

Travel vehicles – in exceptional circumstances we provide a vehicle and driver from a suitably qualified, registered, commercial provider, usually an adapted minibus with pick-up points such as bus stops or, exceptionally, home pick-ups.

Taxi and private hire

Very exceptionally we support pupils to take separate rides, with a passenger assistant if needed – this can be a parent.

Passenger assistants

We'll provide passenger assistants with some transport depending on:

- pupils' ages and the number on the route
- distance between home and school
- individuals' circumstances and special needs.

We could use passenger assistants to:

- support 'walking buses' with several pupils walking to and from school, helping cut vehicle use.
- help pupils travel on public transport where parents can't.
- support pupils on minibuses with safe handover to a responsible adult,
- in taxis.

Passenger Assistants must have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate.

- Is having separate policies a good idea?

We currently have just one policy covering pupils from 5 years to over-16s. We now propose separate policies for 5-16s and for over-16s. We think this makes travel options for over 16s clearer and the switch to over-16 options easier to understand.

- Should reviews be yearly or just at transition points?

You'd no longer have to apply for support each year. But we would regularly review arrangements at key stages, especially for Year 7s and above as they move to secondary or further education or work and may need different support. For example, a pupil may no longer need a passenger assistant or may be ready for independent travel training.

Whenever possible, we'd review travel solutions alongside any EHC (Education, Health and Care) plan annual reviews as well as key transition points.

Pupils going into Year 11 (post-16) must reapply for transport and we'll use the new 16-19 years Transport Policy to decide.

If you're on Working Tax Credit we'd still need to see a copy of your awards notice yearly.