

Travel assistance for post-16 young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)



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This document details the ESCC policy regarding assistance with travel for post-16 students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are continuing in education. This policy takes effect from September 2016.

1. Background information

Local authorities do not have a statutory duty to provide free transport to school or college for students who are above compulsory school age; however ESCC remains committed to providing support for young people with SEND who demonstrate exceptional circumstances regarding the journey to a suitable placement. It is very important that students and their parents or carers consider the journey when making decisions about post-16 options, as the majority of cases will have to arrange and pay for transport themselves. Student support services at schools and colleges will be able to provide information on other sources of funding for young people.

This policy applies to all students with SEND aged 16 or over (Year 12 upwards) who are making a new application for travel assistance from September 2016. All Year 11 students moving into a post-16 placement are required to apply to be considered for continuing support in Year 12, even if they are staying in the same school. Those continuing on a post-16 course starting pre-September 2016 who are already in receipt of travel assistance will be supported under existing arrangements for the duration of their course if their circumstances remain unchanged.

All students who are assessed as eligible for travel assistance are required to pay an annual contribution (adjusted annually) to the County Council towards the cost of their provision, unless they are assessed as being from a low income family, in which case the proposal is currently that half the full contribution will be required, though this too will be reviewed annually. By receiving a contribution, the Council is able to support a greater number of young people to access post-16 education. The contribution is the same amount regardless of the type or frequency of travel assistance provided.

2. Eligibility for SEND travel assistance

The Council recognises that some students with learning difficulties or disabilities may not be able to travel to school or college independently or may not yet be ready to do so. The council expects that where possible in these circumstances parents or carers should be responsible for making travel arrangements.

In exceptional cases, students with learning difficulties or disabilities, or their parents or carers may apply for travel assistance. Each case will be considered by the council's Post 16 Travel Panel, and travel support will usually only be considered further if all the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The student must be attending an appropriate funded, full time course at the nearest school or college to their home. If an alternative suitable course is offered by an FE provider nearer to their home, the student will not be eligible for support.
2. The Council will fund transport to a college placement up to the academic year in which a young person reaches a maximum of 21 years of age.
3. The student must be travelling over three miles to their nearest appropriate provider, unless their learning difficulties or disability means they are unable to travel this distance either walking or on public transport (specific and up to date evidence from relevant health and/or educational appropriate professionals supporting the student will be required to assist the decision) and a parent is not available to take them.

If a student is able to be considered for travel assistance, factors the Council will take into account when determining whether a student is eligible for assistance may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The student is unable to travel to their placement by public transport, either unaccompanied or accompanied by a responsible adult (specific and up to date evidence from relevant health and/or educational appropriate professionals supporting the student will be required).
2. The family does not have a Motability or other suitable vehicle for their transportation to school or college. If a family has a Motability vehicle provided for the benefit of the young person, there is an expectation that this will be used to get them to their post-16 placement.
3. The length or complexity of the journey and whether parents or carers could reasonably be expected to provide transport or act as a chaperone themselves. If parents/carers or other family members are not available this should be fully explained in the application.
4. The student has been assessed by the Authority as requiring an escort, or as a 'high needs' case.
5. Other circumstances relevant to each case.

3. Annual contribution

In all cases where assistance is agreed, a contribution towards to the cost of travel is required. The charge in 2016/2017 is £608 and payment can be made in instalments. Transport will not be arranged until payment in advance is made. If subsequent payments are late, transport will be suspended or even cancelled.

Low income families will be asked to contribute £304 per academic year. Low income is defined as families in receipt of one of the following:

- Income Support*
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance*
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance*
- Support received under part six of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit*
- Child Tax Credit (but not also Working Tax Credit unless in receipt of the maximum level) based on an income of £16,190 or less*

*Correct at the time of consultation

The annual contribution level will be reviewed on an annual basis.

4. Provision

Each applicant who is determined as requiring assistance will be risk-assessed for their immediate needs and the most cost-effective suitable mode of travel support will be arranged. At the same time, each will be assessed for suitability for our intensive Independent Travel Training (ITT) programme, which can provide a young person the skills and confidence for greater independence in their adult life. A young person who is ready for travel training may be offered temporary travel assistance until they have 'graduated' as independent travellers on their journey to school or college, at which point they will be given free bus or train travel for a limited fixed period. For students who can access public transport, a journey time of up to 75 minutes each way is considered reasonable according to national guidance for best practice.

Where an applicant is determined as eligible for SEND travel assistance, the type of travel assistance provided will be the most cost-effective available to the Council at the time, appropriate to the student's needs. This may be one of the following:

- a) A free place on a contract or school bus
- b) A Personal Travel Budget (PTB)
- c) A taxi
- d) Another type of transport / assistance to be determined on individual circumstance; for example, a parent may be expected to transport their child part of the journey in order to get to a suitable pick up point (this might be a bus stop or a taxi pick up point)

Please note that taxis will usually only be provided in the most exceptional cases, and for students with severe disabilities and/or the most complex health needs.

Limitations for travel assistance

- Students will usually only be transported to and from a school or college at their published school start and school finish times. This may therefore require the student to arrive earlier than the start of their first session or wait at the end of their timetabled day until other young people are ready for shared transport.
- The Council does not provide travel assistance to work experience placements, medical appointments or other off-site visits; responsibility for this remains with the parents or carers, or school or college as appropriate.
- Reimbursements for travel costs incurred before application cannot be made.

5. Review of eligibility

1. Any applicant for whom travel assistance has been agreed by the travel panel must apply again each academic year. It should not be assumed that the same form of travel assistance will be agreed for a further period.
2. In every case, travel assistance will be reviewed following a house move, change in placement or course, or a change in the student's needs (condition, medication or equipment) or any other change in circumstances which may be relevant.
3. Following an incident on school or college transport, it may be necessary to stop provision until a further risk assessment has been carried out to make sure that the student can be transported safely. If this occurs, parents or carers remain responsible for transport and costs until the situation has been resolved.
4. Appeals against a decision to refuse transport can be made to the Transport and Student Support Panel. This is a small panel of elected members who will decide whether, in the circumstances of the individual case, to exercise their discretion and allow support either in whole or in part. For a transport appeal form and further information, please contact the Principal Admissions and Transport Officer on 0300 330 9472