

# TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF STATUTORY SCHOOL AGE

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## **1.0 Introduction**

We provide assistance with travel to school, free of charge, for children to whom the following apply:

- The child lives in the Shropshire Council administrative area, is of compulsory school age (5-16), **and**
- They attend their nearest school, catchment school or designated school, **and**
- The school is more than two miles from their home (children at primary age), or more than three miles from their home (children at secondary age)
- **Or** they live within the distances above but can't reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem
- **Or** because the nature of the route means they wouldn't be able to walk it in reasonable safety

## **2.0 Eligibility**

Suitable travel assistance based on a child or young person's specific needs will be provided for pupils who, because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties, can't reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest/catchment or qualifying school.

For pupils aged 5-16 with special education needs, mobility difficulties and/or disabilities and/or an education, health and care plan (EHCP) to qualify for travel assistance, the following must apply:

- Ordinarily residing in the Shropshire Council authoritative area and of compulsory school age
- Travel assistance is only offered from the registered home address
- Registered at their nearest/catchment or qualifying school
- Can't reasonably be expected to walk to school because of associated special educational needs, mobility and/or disability

Travel assistance won't be provided for the following;

- Children or young people taken ill during the day
- Any type of appointments including medical or any other specialists
- Children or young people who have been excluded during the school day
- Breakfast or after-school clubs/any form of childcare



- Journeys from / to alternative addresses/placements
- Journeys between different campuses of the same school or college
- Individual pupil timetables
- Any off-site provision
- Bespoke transport for examinations
- Inductions, transitions or 'taster days'
- School trips if departure and return times sit outside the normal school drop off and collection time

### **3.0 Types of assistance that may be offered**

Once a child or young person's eligibility for travel assistance has been agreed, we'll offer three forms of assistance:

- Personal travel budget (PTB)
- Independent travel training (ITT)
- Assistance in the form of a council-contracted vehicle

This decision will be based on the most suitable type of travel assistance to meet the identified needs of the individual child or young person, and will take account of our duties to make the best use of our resources.

It should be noted that the type of travel assistance offered will be reviewed at least annually, and may change as the needs of the child or young person change, whilst continuing to ensure the most suitable travel assistance is provided to meet individual needs and the best use of our resources.

Travel assistance will usually only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day. Any other journeys required will be the responsibility of parents/carers, including attendance at annual reviews and other appointments.

We'll always consider forms of travel assistance that help to develop independent travel skills to enable children and young people to lead independent lives as they grow older.

#### **Personal Travel Budget (PTB)**

Once it's agreed that a child or young person is eligible for travel assistance, it may be possible for us to provide parents/carers with an amount of money to enable them to provide



personalised travel arrangements that best and most flexibly meets the needs of their child and family. The sum provided will be based on the current contractor and associated seat cost, on a route that's able to meet the needs of the pupil.

It won't exceed the cost of direct provision of transport by the council. It's the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that travel arrangements made by them are safe and accessible, and that school attendance is maintained. A PTB can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions aren't met.

This option may be of interest if:

- The parent/carer wants to take their child to school but needs support to make it financially viable
- The child or young person has very complex needs and the parent/carer wants to make their own travel arrangements, and/or the council may be unable to safely meet the complex needs of the child
- The parent/carer wants to combine the council's contribution with their own personal finances to provide the child or young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs, and fit in with family circumstances

If a parent/carer is offered this form of travel assistance, it's their responsibility to ensure travel arrangements for the child or young person to:

- Enable them to travel safely
- Enable them to attend school regularly and on time; and
- Enable them to be effectively educated once they arrive at school
- **Independent Travel Training (ITT)**
- Once it is agreed that a child or young person is eligible for travel assistance the Council will first consider the suitability of Independent Travel Training as their first travel assistance offer. The training will support a child or young person to be taught the necessary skills that will allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport.
- Timetables (including time management)
- Road Safety including walking and cycling
  - Accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets)
  - Communication
  - Personal Safety (including what-if scenarios)
  - Travel Preparation

If the transport team, SEN education team or education setting identify through a transport application, the assessment process or an annual review that a child or young person may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training program, then it will be arranged for our travel training provider to



conduct an assessment in the first instance to decide if training is a suitable option for the individual.

- If it is decided this is a suitable option, then arrangements will be made to begin training, at the earliest opportunity. A trainer from our travel training provider, will initially contact the parent/carer to arrange an assessment and discuss the offer. This assessment process is undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer and involves contributions from the young person and their parents, school staff and other professionals. It is expected that where independent travel training is offered as a travel solution, a child or young person will take this up

#### **4.0 Application Process**

- Parents must apply for travel assistance by completing an application form. This will be assessed to see if the pupil/student qualifies for travel assistance and parents will be informed of the outcome.
- There is no entitlement to travel expenses or reimbursements for transport arrangements made by parents before they apply to the Council or whilst the application is being processed for travel assistance.
- If your circumstances change such as change of address or change of school placement then a new application form will need to be completed.
- A new application is required when a pupil leaves year 11
- Travel assistance will not be commissioned until the contribution payment has been received from the parent/carer.

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#### **5.0 Appeals Process**

- If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the Council, or the parent/carer disagrees with the type of assistance being offered, parent/carers have a right of appeal. The appeal should be made in writing within 20 working days of the decision letter being received by the parents/carers. Appeals are administered in two stages.
- Stage one – review by a senior officer
- A senior officer from the Specialist Travel Team will review the original decision, including any information provided by the parent/carer in their written appeal.



- Within twenty working days, on receipt of the written appeal a detailed written notification of the outcome will be sent to the parent/carer. This will include information on how to escalate the case to stage 2 (if appropriate).
- Stage two – review by a panel
- A parent/carer has twenty working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
- Within forty working days of receipt of the parent/carer's request an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer and any other supporting information as well as officers involved in the case and will give a detailed written notification of the outcome (5 working days after the panel has met). Parents/carers will have the opportunity to join a formal appeal panel if they wish, this will normally be done online via Microsoft Teams.
- No assistance will be provided/changes to the assistance offered will be made during the appeals process.

#### Appeals | Shropshire Council

#### **6.0 Travel Assistance Reviews**

- All children and young people's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed regularly.
- The review will also determine if the type of assistance remains appropriate and when independent travel training should commence.
- Where travel assistance has been granted on a time-limited basis further information will be sought prior to the end of the agreed assistance period to enable a timely review to take place.
- Travel assistance will also be reviewed when there is a significant change in circumstances, such as a change in home address, school or a change in the child's or young person's needs.



- Transport contracts will also be routinely tendered to ensure we are compliant with procurement rules. We will aim to give families notice (unless tendered for an unforeseen circumstance/emergency reason) and support in managing any change where possible.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the Council immediately of any changes that may affect the provision of travel assistance. Any changes will mean that there may be a period of time that no provision for travel assistance is in place and parents need to have appropriate contingency arrangements in place in order to get their child to school.
- Parents/carers must keep pupil information up to date and inform the Passenger Transport Group of any changes to address, school placements, pupil need/medical need and emergency contact information.

