

Guidance Notes - Application for Post 16 Transport Contribution Scheme (from September 2024)

Who is entitled to Post 16 Transport Assistance?

- The student will be ordinarily resident in Shropshire
- The student will be over 16 and under 19 years of age at the start of the course (normally 1 September) concerned
- The student will be attending full time at the designated post 16 provider for the home address, as determined by the Authority. Where the student is not attending the designated provider for the home address the student may still qualify if the qualification, or a comparable qualification resulting from the course selected, cannot be gained at the designated post 16 provider. In this respect, parents and students are advised to identify carefully the qualification resulting from the course: if, in the view of the Authority, the qualification or comparable qualification is available at a nearer post 16 provider, assistance will not normally be granted. Transport will not normally be considered for an A Level Course, other than at the designated post 16 provider, even if the student is taking A Level subjects that are not available at the designated post 16 provider.
- The distance between the home address and the school/college will be three miles or more, measured over the shortest available pedestrian route.
- Exceptions to attendance at the designated provider for A Level courses or equivalent will only be considered where students can demonstrate that their choice of subject is an essential, not simply 'desirable', prerequisite to their future higher education course or career plans. Such exceptions are few and far between because the course provision at the designated post 16 provider is considered satisfactory to meet any future course or career needs (NB: Higher education establishments do not normally impose specific subject only requirements)
- No transport assistance is available to students on Higher Education courses
- Qualification onto this scheme is dependent on a contribution from the applicant

Notes:

- Where a vocational course is not available within the County of Shropshire, applications to out of county Post 16 providers will be considered, up to a maximum 20 mile radius from the border of Shropshire.
- Where joint admissions procedures exist in Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury College will be recognised by the Authority as jointly serving the same attendance area as Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.
- The designated Post 16 providers for the villages of Church Stretton, All Stretton and Little Stretton, will be either Shrewsbury Sixth Form College/Shrewsbury College or Ludlow College
- The Marches School has been recognised by the Authority as jointly serving the same attendance areas as North Shropshire College
- The designated Post 16 providers for the village of Chirbury and its surrounding area will be either Shrewsbury Colleges Group or Ludlow College

Application

- Application forms should be submitted as early as possible, from 1st June onwards, to avoid a delay in processing during the busiest period of the year. It is recommended that applications should be submitted by 31st July 2024 so that passes can be made available for the start of the academic year (subject to entitlement and contribution)
- There is no set time for processing applications although we aim for each application to take no more than 2 weeks to be processed. Applicants will be responsible for meeting any interim travel costs.
- Entitled applicants will be notified in writing, normally via email, and details of what to do next will be explained in the letter.
- Where applications are granted and it is subsequently found that the applicant does not qualify under the policy, any pass issued will be withdrawn, cancelled and any contribution will be refunded where appropriate.

Modes of Travel

The Council do not normally provide taxis under the Post 16 scheme. The Council are not recommending that students apply and purchase a travel pass via the Post 16 scheme, as students may wish to contact commercial operators (e.g. Arriva, Lakeside Coaches, Minsterley Motors etc.) who may offer alternative transport solutions. It is the responsibility of the parent and students to determine the travel arrangements they so wish, whether they be the Council scheme where entitlement is granted, a commercial or private or other solution.

Assistance will be given in the way considered most appropriate by the Authority. This will be by:

- The provision of a travel pass for existing public bus or rail services,
- The provision of a travel pass for existing Local Authority or contracted service where seats are available,
- Where no suitable transport service exists, the payment of travelling expenses at the approved rate, either to the nearest transport pick up point (where it is 2 miles or more from the home address as measured by the shortest available pedestrian route) or the school/college

Following submission of this application, you will receive a letter saying whether you qualify under this scheme for assistance. If you are entitled, you will be asked for an annual contribution of £933 towards the costs. This payment can either be paid in full or in 3 termly instalments of Autumn - £315.00, Spring - £315.00 and Summer - £303.00. The pass request form will give you full details and the level of charges. You will not be able to submit payment prior to receiving confirmation of eligibility to receive transport assistance.

For families on defined benefits (please see below), a contribution towards the cost of the transport assistance will be £299 for the academic year. This payment can either be paid in full or in 3 termly instalments of Autumn - £105.00, Spring - £105.00 and Summer - £89.00.

The following are the defined benefits to qualify for the reduced contribution:

- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Support
- Free School Meals – as authorised by the Authority, not the college that your son/daughter is attending
- Child Tax Credit with annual income, as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs, of less than £16,190. This figure will be taken from your 2024/25 award notice.
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- The guarantee element of pension credit

Travel passes will not be issued until the contribution has been received. Travel will not be allowed without a pass, except on fare paying bus services. The student may be required to pay a fare until the pass has been received. These costs are not refundable. Students who do not qualify under this scheme cannot contribute and get a pass. A re-application must be made where a student starts a new course, or moves address.

The contribution allows a student to have a travel pass for one return journey Monday – Friday term time only, to school/college at the normal school/college day and for a journey at the end of that day. In most cases, students may use their travel passes to travel to college up until 12 noon and return home after 12 noon. However, in some cases, operators may be able to allow more flexibility with their passes they issue. There are no refunds on days that a student does not use the travel pass, or where transport does not operate due to inclement weather.

Post 16 transport will only be considered upon completion of the appropriate application form.

It should be noted that there could be bus service changes during the academic year and these changes may not offer the same or similar service.

Government Funded 16-19 Bursary Scheme

- The 16-19 Bursary Scheme provides financial support for learners aged 16-19 to access education or training. Schools and colleges are responsible for awarding bursaries and the amount paid. They can also apply to the Learner Support Service for additional funding for vulnerable students. Details of the Bursary Scheme are available on the Direct Gov website at: www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

Travel Pass

- The travel pass will normally be available for collection by the Student/College within 2 weeks of the contribution and, where applicable, the proof of benefits and photographs being received. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to provide the relevant paperwork/photographs, not the colleges, due to Data Protection regulations.

- The passes will be valid until the end of the term or academic year (those contributing termly will be invited to contribute for the spring and summer term passes towards the end of the previous term and new termly passes will be issued on receipt of the contribution). Where the student becomes 19 years of age during the course, assistance will cease at the end of the academic year in which the 19th birthday falls.
- If the student leaves school/college during the academic year, the pass must be returned to the school/college or the Passenger Transport team – failure to do so may result in the applicant being invoiced for any refund lost by the Authority. A minimum period of refund for Post 16 contribution scheme is half a term and refunds for less than that will not normally be granted.

Appeals

If a student is refused transport assistance, staff within the Entitlement Team will provide, in writing, the reasons for the rejection of an application at the point of assessment. If an application for travel assistance is not approved, you do have the right to appeal. Appeals should be made in writing and should set out the exact nature and grounds of the appeal. Please note that during the appeal stages, travel assistance will not be provided, nor will a change to existing travel assistance be made.

Stage 1 - Officer Review A senior officer from the Passenger Transport Group 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 2 - Transport Appeals 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).

Any request for an appeal should be sent in writing via email to schooltransport@shropshire.gov.uk or to the postal address: Passenger Transport Group, Shropshire Council, 107 Longden Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 9DS.

Safety

Parents are fully responsible for the safety and care of their children until they board the transport at the designated pick-up point and, on the return journey, from the moment they alight from the vehicle at the designated drop-off point.

Special Educational Needs

Should an applicant have a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan, then you will need to complete an alternative application form

so that we can better assess the needs of the applicant. Once a placement at an educational facility has been secured, an application will need to be assessed by the Specialist Travel Team.

For full details of eligibility or schemes available, please go to,

<https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/the-send-local-offer/travel-and-transport/>

On this website, you can download a copy of the application form.