

## Borough of Telford & Wrekin Home to School Travel Assistance Policy



In Telford & Wrekin we want to ensure all children and young people are as independent and successful as possible in their adult lives. This will be different for each child or young person and therefore we plan and work together to enable individuals to:

- Get a job, become employable or be engaged in meaningful activity
- Live as independently as possible
- Actively participate in community life – have friends and personal interests
- Be as healthy as possible

Travelling as independently as possible plays an important role in how children and young people achieve these 'Preparing for Adulthood outcomes' and live ordinary lives. This Policy sets out how we will support this.

For children and young people who are not yet able to travel independently, we want them to have opportunities to travel between home and school in as ordinary a way as possible.

This includes:

- How far and how long they travel - time to study, play or relax
- Who they travel with – we want children and young people to travel with people who know them best, and family or friends

- Opportunities in which to develop the skills necessary for independent travel – self-regulation, resilience, social interaction and social communication skills, anxiety-management, problem solving, time-keeping etc.

We want to support and advise families to support their own children/ young people. Where additional support is needed, it will always be by the most inclusive and least specialist form of travel possible, to ensure that travel supports a child/young person's wider outcomes.

We want to ensure our children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have choice and control in accessing services (including educational settings), social opportunities and participation opportunities. We want children and young people with SEND to feel the valuable part they play in society and to be able to access opportunities to be with all peers, including those without SEND.

In compiling this policy, we have ensured we have considered the latest statutory guidance and regulations issued by The Department for Education (DFE) and other Government organisations.

This policy sets out the criteria that will be used to assess whether your child or young person qualifies for home (the place where the child is habitually and normally resident) to school (the educational setting where the child is on roll) travel assistance, at the start and end of the day. This does not relate to travel between educational institutions or other provision during the usual school day.

The policy for travel assistance for post -16 education and training is different from that for students of compulsory school age and can be found on the Council's website here: [http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6423/post\\_16\\_transport\\_policy](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6423/post_16_transport_policy)

**This policy** explains:

- Which children are eligible for home to school transport
- Our spare seats scheme
- How to apply for home to school travel assistance
- How to appeal a home to school travel assistance decision

**Travel assistance** will be subject to eligibility criteria and only available where your child attends the nearest '**qualifying school**' or a place other than that 'school' whereby arrangements have been made for their attendance due to exclusion, illness or otherwise. The nearest qualifying school will be determined by the Council. The following types of school are classified as 'parental preference' and therefore funded travel assistance is not provided:

- Grammar Schools

- Faith Schools<sup>1</sup>.
- A school that is not the nearest or qualifying school

Although we will not provide funded travel assistance to parental preference schools, spare seats on established routes may be purchased and further information is contained later on in this policy.

A child may also be eligible for free home to school travel where they receive education at a place other than a school if an [arrangement](#) has been made under section 19 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Where a child is on the register for a school but has been excluded and now attends an alternative educational establishment that is not a classed as their qualifying school, the new educational establishment will be treated as a qualifying school and the child would be registered as a pupil at that school.

Best practice suggests that the maximum time of a single journey for a child of primary school age is 45 minutes and a young person of secondary school age, 75 minutes. Our teams will always try to offer a solution which does not exceed these timings.

The DFE's general expectation is that a child or young person will be accompanied where necessary between home and school by their parent, carer or legal guardian.

### **Eligibility Criteria:**

All children between 5 and 16 qualify for travel assistance if they go to their nearest qualifying school and live at least:

- 2 miles from the school if they're under 8
- 3 miles from the school if they're 8 and under 16

### **Special educational needs, disabilities and mobility problems:**

Where the child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school (accompanied by a parent/carers as necessary and considering the age of the child, as well as whether one would normally expect a child of that age to be accompanied) because of mobility problems, or because of associated health and safety issues related to their SEN or Disability, we will review and assess each child on an individual basis. Usual transport requirements (e.g. the statutory walking distances) may not be considered when assessing the transport needs of children eligible due to SEN and/ or disability.

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<sup>1</sup> Other than on the ground of low Income as described in Extended Rights.

The pupil must be attending the nearest qualifying school or a setting named on his or her Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), following formal consultation by the SEN Team, rather than a setting named due to parental preference.

Where a pre-school child with an EHCP has been placed at a nursery, special school or other specialist provision by the Council, travel assistance may be provided in the same way as for children of statutory school age but a charge will be made. The charge will follow the same charging approach set out in the Post 16 Policy's non statutory charge.

When applying for travel assistance, parents and carers of children with SEN and mobility issues, are asked to complete a comprehensive online questionnaire which collects information to help officers make an informed decision about the application. This questionnaire asks for detailed information about the child's health, abilities with regard to travel and interventions, should the child not be settled at any stage during their travel. Where appropriate, this information may be shared with providers to form the child's travel plan and to support the risk assessment.

#### **Route suitability:**

When assessing the suitability of the route used to measure the travelling distance from a child/ young person's home address to the school, we give consideration to a number of factors that might apply at the time your child would be expected to walk the route (accompanied as necessary) in order to attend school for their full statutory education hours during usual timetabled school hours.

DFE guidance is that it is reasonable for a child to walk to a designated pick up point and for pupils up to the age of 8, this would be 1 mile accompanied by their parent/carer, and 2 miles for any pupil over the age of 8.

#### **• Unsafe route eligibility:**

We will use technology to identify, measure and assess routes. This route will be the shortest route that the child, accompanied as required, may walk to school safely. This may not necessarily be the shortest distance by road and may include footpaths, bridleways and alternative entrances to the school. Where a parent/carer deems a walking route to their qualifying school is unsafe for their child (when accompanied by themselves), they should contact the Transport team and one of our professional road safety auditors will assess a route to determine whether it is safe for walking.

#### **Extended rights (Children from low income families):**

We will provide travel assistance for children who are **entitled to free school meals**, or if a parent with whom they live receives **the maximum amount of Working Tax Credit/ Universal Credit**, if:

- they are **aged 8 to 10**, attend their nearest suitable school and it is **more than 2 miles** from their home; or
- they are **aged 11 to 16**, attend one of the 3 nearest suitable schools and it is **between 2 and 6 miles** from their home and there are fewer than three suitable schools nearer to their home; or
- they are **aged 11 to 16** and attend a school that is **between 2 and 15 miles** from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their **religion or belief** if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no nearer suitable school to their home.

Where a child is eligible for extended rights to free home to school transport, their eligibility will be re-assessed at the beginning of each academic year.

### **Residential Placements:**

The frequency for journeys between home and school/ college is agreed between the Council, schools, young people and parents and carers in the first instance. Travel to residential placements will normally be agreed for the beginning and end of each term only. All applications are renewed annually.

### **Children and young people with disabled parents:**

We promote and ensure equality of opportunity for disabled parents. Where a child or young person needs to be accompanied along a route that would be deemed unsafe without adult supervision, but a parent/carer cannot provide that supervision because they are themselves a disabled person, (medical reports / other evidence is required), then a reasonable adjustment might be to provide home to school travel for the child in question.

### **Compulsory school age children in temporary accommodation:**

Children from low income families who have been moved to temporary local authority accommodation, such as a bed and breakfast, can get free travel for up to two terms. This is so they can keep going to the same school while arrangements are made for transition to the nearest suitable school. The temporary accommodation address must be beyond 2 miles from school, and the child must have been attending their nearest suitable school before they moved into temporary local authority accommodation. Children who are in Key Stage 4 (year 10 & 11) at the time of being moved, will be supported in their current school until the end of Key Stage 4, as long as the school remains beyond 2 miles from the child's temporary accommodation address.

### **Children with dual living arrangements**

Where a child lives with shared parental responsibility, the home address used to assess eligibility will be taken as the one where the child spends the most time. Where equal time is spent with both parents, the home address will be taken as the one regulated to receive child benefit. When there is shared care, parents must opt to use one address for their application.

## **Looked After Children**

Our looked after children are assessed for support within the ethos of the full Home to School Travel Policy to enable them to be empowered to become more independent with travel, developing skills that will be extremely valuable in their future. How a young person is supported in travelling to and from school can be an important aspect of their social inclusion and, in the longer term, vital for attaining maximum independence and life choices.

A range of options for support with travel is available and reviewed at regular intervals throughout a child/young person's education/care.

Where a child/young person is placed with a Telford & Wrekin foster carer we will endeavour to support that young person to travel as independently as possible (accompanied as necessary).

In very exceptional circumstances (such as where interim care orders are in place pending final decisions), a young person may be placed in a care placement Out Of Authority but have sound educational reasons for continuing at their current school in the borough. In such circumstances, in full consultation with Social Care, travel assistance may be offered.

Where a child is placed within an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA), transport will be in line with the current National Framework Contract for Independent Fostering Agency placements:

*'The provider or their carers are expected to fund the day to day travel needs for children/young people placed within a 20 mile radius. This agreement shall be specified in the individual Placement Agreement (IPA).'*

Where the journey exceeds the 20 mile radius, we will review the case on its own merits to consider if we can support travel assistance.

We are not responsible for the travel assistance relating to children placed with IFA's by other councils in our borough.

### **How will your child's travel assistance will be provided:**

Should your child be eligible for travel assistance, this will be offered in the following priority order:

- Independent Travel Training - Access to Independent Travel Training – support is provided alongside a training programme to enable the child or young person to travel independently over a period of time. This may be provided in conjunction with other forms of travel assistance, for example, travel passes. Our experienced Council officers will work with your child alongside family, school and college to develop safe travel plans and routes to increase independence
- a mileage allowance to parents/carers for taking their child to school at the start of the day and taking their child home at the end of the day using their own vehicle - paid in arrears on a monthly basis to the parent/carer
- A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) - payment given to families of children who have an Education Health Care Plan directly which they then use to ensure their child gets to and from school every day
- a funded travel pass to occupy a seat on a vehicle operated by Council Fleet Transport Services
- a funded travel pass to occupy a seat on a mini bus, coach or taxi operated under contract to the Council.
- In the cases of children with **individual needs** or children with **special education needs, disabilities and mobility problems** will determine the support required. Where necessary, we will provide a specialist vehicle (for example, a vehicle that is able to accommodate a wheelchair). Where necessary, we will also provide passenger assistants.

Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are carried out on all drivers and passenger assistants of council and contracted providers.

Where a child is picked up and dropped off at home, it is the parents/carers responsibility to be at home to hand the child over to the driver on the outbound journey and to be at home to receive the child from the driver at the end of the school day.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

In **exceptional circumstances**, we will consider providing free or subsidised home to school transport for children who do not fall within eligibility criteria.

The following are examples of circumstances in which we may consider providing free or subsidised home to school transport:

- In cases of domestic violence, where a child has moved to a refuge – to enable them to continue attending their current school where it is no longer their nearest school

- Where a looked after child has moved to a new placement - to enable them to continue attending their current school where it is no longer their nearest school.

### **Spare seats**

Where there are **spare seats** in buses, minibuses and taxis that we contract to provide free home to school transport for eligible children, these are **available to be purchased** by the parents or carers of **children who are not eligible**.

Please see the spare seat offer on our web page via this **LINK** *[attached as a doc at this stage]*

### **Behaviour on School Transport**

We expect parents and schools to promote good standards of behaviour by children on their journey to and from school through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 empowers headteachers to take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when their pupils are not under the legal control of the school. We also take this to mean behaviour on school buses, or taxis on the route to and from school, whether or not their pupils are in school uniform.

In certain situations, where there is serious and/or persistent behavioural issues in council provided transport, we will consider withdrawing travel assistance until the situation is resolved with parents/carers working with us, the school and the transport provider to resolve the situation.

### **How to Apply**

If your child meets the eligibility criteria as set out above and qualifies for travel assistance to their nearest qualifying school you can apply online via this link:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20025/school\\_information/10/home\\_to\\_school\\_transport](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20025/school_information/10/home_to_school_transport)

For those parents and carers who may have difficulty in accessing or completing this application, support and help is available from our support officers at our First Point and Library offices across the borough:

[http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20497/find\\_a\\_council\\_office/649/first\\_point\\_telford](http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20497/find_a_council_office/649/first_point_telford)

You are encouraged to provide as much information as possible to support the application especially where it relates to a child or young person with SEND who may have particular support needs when travelling.



We advise you to submit applications for the new school year to us **BY 30th JUNE**. It can take up to 20 days to process your application as each case is considered on its own merits so, you must organise your own travel assistance whilst an application is being considered.

## **Review and Appeal – Stage 1 & Stage 2**

Should an application be declined or you are not happy with the travel assistance arrangements, you have a right of appeal. It will be your responsibility to ensure your child attends school whilst any appeal is being carried out. We must receive this appeal within 20 working days of our decision. After this date, our decision will remain final.

Details of where to send your appeal will be contained in your decline letter.

### **Stage 1: review by Senior Officer**

Your appeal will be considered by a **senior officer** delegated by the Director for Services. They will review the original transport decision in light of the information you have provided. You will receive their decision in writing within **20 working days** of us having received your appeal.

### **Stage 2: appeal hearing**

If you are not happy with the senior officer's decision at stage 1, you may **escalate** your appeal to stage 2. At stage 2, your appeal will be considered by an **independent transport appeal panel** at an **appeal hearing**.

The panel will be made up of three independent Council officers who were **not involved** in the original decision or in stage 1 of the complaint.

The hearing will take place within **40 working days** of you notifying us that you wish to escalate your appeal to stage 2.

If you wish, you may attend this hearing to explain to the panel why you do not agree with the Council's transport decision.

Council officers involved in the case will also attend the hearing to explain the reasons for its transport decision in your case. There will be an opportunity for you to ask the Officers questions during the hearing.

You will receive the appeal panel's **decision** in writing within **5 working days** of the appeal hearing.

## **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

If, following your appeal, you feel we have refused help unfairly, made a mistake or not handled your application for home to school transport correctly, you may make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

For more information visit: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>.

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