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Travel assistance policy for Post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

2025-26 academic year



Document purpose

This policy sets out how West Sussex County Council (“the Council”) will decide eligibility for travel support for learners aged 19 to 25 who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In formulating this policy, the Council has had regard to the statutory guidance on “Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training” and in relation to the duty set out in section 508F Education Act 1996.

Please contact us if you’d like this document translated into another language or need other assistance reading this document.

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1. Introduction

1.1. This policy explains the Council's statutory responsibility in respect of travel assistance for adult learners. It states how to apply for travel assistance and how eligibility is determined and assessed. Adult learners are those aged 19 and over who started their programme of learning after their 19th birthday and for whom an EHC plan is maintained.

1.2. Separate policies set out the provision for children of compulsory school age and students aged 16 to 19, these can be found on our [home to school and college transport policy](#) webpage.

2. Local authority responsibility

2.1. Statutory guidance states that if someone asks a council for transport assistance for a young adult over 19 years old it must assess their situation and decide whether to provide transport or financial support reasonably, considering all relevant matters. Councils are expected to target support at those who need it most. The Council is committed to providing travel assistance to post 19 learners with SEND, when their SEND and circumstances mean that they could not otherwise access their placement.

2.2. The law concerning education transport is set out in the Education Act 1996 as amended ("the Act"). The Act divides children and young people into three groups: children of compulsory school age; young people of sixth form age; and adult learners. For adult learners, councils must 'make arrangements they consider necessary to facilitate their attendance'. Statutory Guidance 'Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training' (January 2019) notes that the overall intention of the adult transport duty is to ensure that 'those with the most severe disabilities with no other means of transportation can undertake further education and training after their 19th birthday to help them move towards more independent living.'

2.3. Section 508F of the Act requires local authorities to make transport arrangements they consider "necessary" to facilitate the attendance of relevant young adults (defined as adults for whom an EHC plan is maintained) at institutions where the local authority has secured the provision of education for the adult learner concerned. When a council finds it is 'necessary' to provide transport for the young adult under section 508F, then the transport must be provided and be free of charge (the Act, section 508F(4)).

3. Criteria for travel assistance

3.1. The following gateway criteria must be met for an application for travel assistance to be considered:

- The student lives in West Sussex **and**
- Where the proposed further education course, or comparable course, or a course appropriate to the level of needs, is at the nearest appropriate school/college to the student's home address (regardless of county boundaries) **and**
- The student will be attending the equivalent of a full-time educational course which allows for appropriate progression. The definition of full-time education constitutes a minimum of 540 planned learning hours per academic year **and**

- the shortest available walking route⁴ from home to school/college is three miles or more **and**
- the student has lived in the United Kingdom, for reasons other than education, throughout the three years ending 31st August 2025 and has settled status in the United Kingdom **and**
- have an individual assessment of their needs to determine what arrangement the council considers necessary. For Post-19 students starting a new course, you must evidence why it is necessary for the Council and not the student to make travel arrangements. In considering the eligibility of the adult learner to receive an offer and what offer should be made, the officer will consider the following and/or any other relevant factors listed in Section 5.

3.2. If these gateway criteria are met, the Council will then consider the circumstances of the adult learner including any support their parent/carer and their broader network are able to provide, to assess whether it is necessary to provide transport for the adult learner. Further information on how this will be considered can be found in section 5 below.

3.3. Medical exceptions may still be considered for applicants residing under 3 miles. Eligibility is assessed on a case-by-case basis to establish if a young adult cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school or college if residing under 3 miles. An application requesting a medical exception takes account of the young adult's physical ability to walk to school and any health and safety issues related to their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems. To assist in determining a young adult's physical ability, we will need to see medical evidence from a consultant confirming the medical condition and any relevant facts regarding or impacting upon mobility. We will also need to know how long transport assistance is required and an indication of what type of travel is appropriate. All cases where transport is agreed will be reviewed regularly unless it is a time- limited offer of support.

4. Application process

4.1. The quickest and most secure way to make an application is online using the [Post-19 transport application form](#). On submission of an online application form, you will get an automated email acknowledgement. Alternatively, we can send you a paper copy of the form on request. Support with completing the application form can be provided by your assigned key worker.

4.2. A new application is required for everyone requesting Post-19 travel assistance whether the adult learner is remaining in the same college or moving to a new place of learning. In addition, a new application is needed for each new course or placement or when the adult learner moves home address.

4.3. Applications will be considered to determine if the gateway criteria as set out in section 3 are met. More information may be sought to help with the decision. Information on how the decision is made can be found in the next section.

4.4. On average it could take 20 days for a decision to be communicated to the applicant. It can take additional time to reach a decision depending on the timing of the application and whether further information needs to be requested.

4.5. The application needs to make clear whether the learner is living independently from their family and what support that family can offer in respect of travel to college. If the learner is living with family, the officer will use this information to decide if it is necessary to provide travel assistance.

4.6. Reimbursements for travel costs incurred before an application is approved, and travel assistance arranged will not be made.

4.7. If you disagree with the decision to decline your eligibility for home to school transport assistance, you can lodge an appeal. Further information on how to appeal can be found in section 10.

5. How decisions are made

5.1. All applications will be considered by a Children, Young People and Learning Coordinator. They will consider the individual circumstances of each case and will not apply blanket policies or make assumptions about accompaniment. Applications will be assessed based on the evidence provided but the officer may request additional information. The officer will consider whether it is necessary for the Council to provide travel assistance in each case. In some cases, the officer will seek advice from the senior officers. The officer will use the information provided in the application, a financial statement provided as part of the application and any other email correspondence with the Council in relation to the provision of transport as well as verbal information provided during phone calls.

5.2. In considering the eligibility of the adult learner to receive an offer and what offer should be made, the officer will consider the following and/or any other relevant factors:

- Nature of the journey for the adult learner for example, the distance, journey time, and complexity of the journey by road, public transport or on foot; whether the journey could be reasonably made if the adult learner is accompanied.
- Parent/carer/broader network ability to provide transport support, e.g., accompanying the learner on some journeys; transporting the learner on certain days.
- Available suitable vehicle for example, whether the adult learner has a vehicle for their use, which may include a Motability vehicle.
- The adult learner's needs relating to travel for example, whether the adult learner has complex needs, and/or requires a second person on transport, if independent travel is a realistic goal.
- Any income available to the young adult that can reasonably be expected to be used to fund transport to and from college. This may include, for example, a college bursary, disability benefits or the mobility component of personal independence payments (PIP).
- The financial circumstances of the adult learner and potential impact of a declined application. A financial statement will be requested in support of the application to determine reasonable outgoings on essential items. The Council reserves the right to verify financial information via a request for evidence.

- Advice from the college, for example, whether independent travel training is part of the learning programme.
- Other relevant factors.

5.3. The following evidence may be required in addition to an application for travel assistance:

- Recent evidence from a relevant health and/or educational professional regarding the SEND of the adult learner and how this impacts on the need for travel assistance, their ability to walk or travel on public transport, accompanied or otherwise.
- A copy of the care and support plan (if applicable).
- Where the parent/carer is stated as being the primary carer/advocate for the adult learner and/or in receipt of carer's allowance, further evidence may be required regarding the support with transport they are able to provide (if any).

5.4. Occasionally an adult learner will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In accordance with statutory guidance, travel assistance will only be provided from and to a single address at which the young adult learner is habitually and normally resident. Where a young adult learner splits their time equally between addresses, travel assistance will be assessed from the address which is registered with the college/sixth form as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant college/sixth form admission application form.

6. What happens if travel assistance is approved

6.1. Applications are processed in three stages:

Stage one

Determining eligibility - officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 20 working days of receiving an application. This may take longer depending on the complexity of the decision.

Stage two

Assessing needs on transport - an assessment will be completed detailing the adult learners needs on transport and any medical issues they may have to ensure they are safely transported. The time this takes will vary depending on the needs of the adult learner. The applicant will be kept up to date with the progress of this stage.

Stage three

Setting up transport - an officer will determine which mode of travel is appropriate based on the needs assessment and then will set this up. This can take up to 15 working days from submission of student timetable (where relevant), depending on the complexity of the needs of the adult learner.

6.2. Whilst every effort will be made to complete the transport arrangements as quickly as possible, you will need to make your own travel arrangements until this is set up. We will not reimburse for any costs incurred during this time.

6.3. It is for the Council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get pupils between home and college, taking account of any special arrangements to support the adult learner's particular needs. Once this task has been completed, the Transport Coordination Group will contact parents/carers by email or telephone to advise them of the arrangements. Parents/carers are not able to choose which form of transport or specific vehicle their adult learner will travel on. If you disagree with the type of assistance being offered, you should contact the home to school and college transport team via school.transport@westsussex.gov.uk to discuss your concerns. If they are unable to resolve your query, you can then raise a complaint (see section 14 below) or an appeal (see section 10 below).

6.4. Consideration will be given to the most suitable travel assistance for the adult learner. This will be in the form of:

- Public transport i.e. bus or train pass
- Personal Transport Budget
- Minibus or taxi

6.5. Independent travel training (ITT): ITT is the process by which a person learns to make a journey between two places on their own and in safety – in this case the journey between home and college. The training supports the adult learner to gain additional independence by providing extra help or support to make journeys alone using public transport (and walking or cycling as necessary). Adult learners will be considered for an assessment for their suitability for ITT and we expect parents/carers to positively engage with this process. Where adult learners are assessed as being suitable for ITT and they and/or their family/carer do not positively engage with ITT, an offer of travel assistance may be withdrawn. At the end of the ITT, the learner will be assessed on their ability to travel independently. When they have been assessed to have completed the ITT, and therefore able to travel independently, the travel assistance will be ceased or amended accordingly.

6.6. Personal Transport Budget (PTB): A family may be offered a [Personal Transport Budget](#) which provides financial assistance for families to organise transport to school/college.

6.7. Minibus or taxi: Where the Council will be providing the transport, the student will have their travel needs assessed for the provision of safe and suitable transport arrangements. This type of transport is shared with other students unless the needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable.

7. Limitations of the travel assistance we provide

7.1. Adult learners will usually only be transported at published college start and finish times, and they may be expected to enable sharing with other adult learners through early arrival or delayed collection if safe to do so; or adult learners may need to arrive earlier or leave later than their taught hours in college.

7.2. An offer of travel assistance may be part-week or involve a pick-up or drop-off point, i.e., not door to door. This will, however, be assessed on a case-by-case basis, depending on the adult learners needs and finances.

8. Occasions when travel assistance is not supplied or withdrawn

8.1. The Council will only provide travel assistance to get adult learners to and from college at the beginning and end of the college's published day. It is the responsibility of parents, carers, or colleges to arrange and pay for transport at other times.

8.2. Transport will not be provided for the following:

- Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
- Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the college /education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
- To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
- To accommodate attendance at after-college activities or homework clubs.
- Before or after medical appointments
- To accommodate work experience or off-site educational placements
- For pre-course visits, 'taster' days or parents' evenings/visits
- In the event of sickness where an adult learner must be collected from college
- Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal college day
- College trips or educational visits
- Transport is not provided for taster sessions or induction weeks

8.3. We may withdraw the adult learners transport in cases where your circumstances change and therefore your entitlement will need to be reviewed or if you appeal the decision made on your application. We will give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to enable you time to make your own alternative arrangements.

9. Operational practices and service limitations

9.1. The Council's transport is shared with other passengers unless the safety of the adult learner and vehicle will be compromised. Examples of reasons for agreeing that an adult learner needs to travel in a vehicle without other passengers are where it is agreed that the safety of the adult learner, driver and/or fellow passengers would be compromised. This will be established during the needs assessment.

9.2. The Council cannot guarantee the travel arrangements e.g., passenger assistant/driver will stay the same throughout the college course. You will need to be prepared for this possibility although we will give as much notice as possible when making changes. You should also be prepared for unforeseen circumstances such as illness or vehicle breakdown.

9.3. In the morning, you will need to have the adult learner ready at the agreed collection time. Drivers are required to wait for five minutes from the agreed time before leaving.

9.4. In the afternoon, you will need to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student at the arranged time unless it has been agreed between the Council and parent/carer in advance that this is not necessary. Drivers are required to wait only for five minutes after the agreed drop-off time before leaving, as delays could impact other students and their families. Failure to make sure that a responsible person is at home to receive the student may result in the student being taken to a safe place. Costs associated with looking after or transporting the student due to a parent or carer not being ready to receive the student will be passed on to the family. It is also the parent or carer's responsibility to collect the student from the safe place or arrange and pay for their travel home.

9.5. Passenger assistants are provided on transport only when it is determined as being required for the needs of the adult learner, and this requirement will be reviewed regularly.

9.6. Expected behaviour on Council organised transport – Seat belts must be worn where fitted. In addition, adult learners must not smoke or vape on college transport, drop litter inside the vehicle, eat or drink in the vehicle or stand up or move around in the vehicle whilst it is moving.

9.7. All personal equipment, e.g., musical instruments, laptop, tablets, mobile phones etc., should be secured in a suitable bag. If an adult learner causes damage to a vehicle, the operator may make a request to be reimbursed for any repairs. If an adult learner misbehaves persistently on a college vehicle, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action to protect other users of the service. This may involve, among other steps, issuing a ban on transport.

9.8. Vehicle breakdowns - If the vehicle breaks down, the driver will call for assistance. Passengers must follow the instructions of the driver. It is normal for passengers to wait in the vehicle, with the driver and/or passenger assistant, until a replacement vehicle arrives.

9.9. Adult learners sharing with other passengers may have to arrive early or have a delayed collection if safe to do so.

9.10. Parents should make contingency plans in the event of transport not turning up or where there are unavoidable delays.

9.11. If the adult learner attends a residential college and qualifies for travel assistance, this will only be provided at the start and end of each half-term or each week depending on the boarding arrangements. This will be made clear when the application is approved. We do not provide transport at other times or for parent/carer visits for meetings.

10. Appeal process

10.1. Applicants have the right to appeal if they disagree with the initial eligibility decision. The Council operates a two-stage appeal process.

Stage 1 appeal

- A stage 1 appeal form needs to be completed to make an appeal.
- All stage 1 appeals will be considered by the Assistant Director for Education & Skills. The Assistant Director for Education & Skills will consider the appeal form; any information provided in support of the appeal; the application form; supporting information provided with the application; and any other correspondence used by the officer to reach a decision.
- We shall aim to provide you with a decision from your stage 1 appeal within 20 working days of receipt of the application. You will receive an email with the detailed reasoning for the decision. We will also inform you how to escalate your appeal to the next stage if you disagree with the outcome.

Stage 2 appeal

- A stage 2 appeal form needs to be completed to make a Stage 2 appeal.
- All stage 2 appeals will be considered by the Transport Appeal Panel ("the Appeal Panel"). This is made up of three elected County Councillors who are independent of officers and the Stage 1 appeal process. The Appeal Panel will consider the original application, and the appeal forms together with any supporting documents or information provided to WSCC in relation to the application or the appeal. The Appeal Panel will also consider all verbal information made by the learner/parent/carer (such as via phone calls) where it is provided before the deadline for the meeting. The Appeal Panel may have questions during a hearing and in that situation, they may ask for the supporting officer to seek clarification by making a telephone call to the learner/parent/carer.
- The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application. Within 5 working days of the meeting, you will be informed of their decision with the detailed reasoning in writing. We will also inform you how to escalate your complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if you consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there were any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been managed.
- If the Appeal Panel is not satisfied it has enough information to reach a decision it may send a letter containing its provisional view on a stage 2 appeal and/or requesting further information. This is called a 'minded to' letter. Where necessary, this letter will be sent within 5 working days of the Appeal Panel meeting. A minded to letter is an opportunity for the appellant to comment on the Appeal Panel's provisional view of the stage 2 appeal, to answer any questions or points of clarification raised in the letter and to provide any further information requested. The letter will set out how long you must respond to it, but this is usually 7 days. The Appeal Panel will then meet to finally determine your stage 2 appeal considering any response to its minded to letter.

10.2. More information about the appeals process, as well as the appeal forms can be requested by contacting Post19Travel@westsussex.gov.uk.

11. Review of travel provision

11.1. A new application must be made if the adult learner moves to a new home or the family's circumstances change.

11.2. Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in having to pay back for costs incurred by the Council.

11.3. The mode of travel assistance being offered will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the adult learner's needs and the most cost effective for the Council.

12. Concessionary seat scheme (paid transport)

12.1. Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the Council, the adult learner/parent/carer may be able to apply and pay for a vacant concessionary seat: This is only possible for some routes to colleges, and we can only give seats on our existing vehicles where there are spaces available and where the proposed addition does not negatively affect existing travellers or the safety of the vehicle. This means we are not able to offer a seat to everyone.

12.2. It may be necessary for the adult learner to get themselves or be taken to an existing stop. If a change is made to the shared route which means that the cost of the vacant seat increases, this increase may be passed onto the adult learner, or the offer of the vacant seat withdrawn. We will have to withdraw the vacant seat offer if we need the seat for someone else who qualifies for free transport or if we no longer have anyone on the route that qualifies for free transport. WSCC will give as much notice as possible, however the minimum notice given will be one week.

12.3. Further information is available on our [paid transport](#) webpage.

13. Changes to this policy

13.1. If the Council makes any change to this policy which is assessed as likely to have an impact on current and prospective adult learners, the Council will inform the immediately affected adult learners at the earliest opportunity. Such changes may include, but are not limited to, changes required by the impact of further cost saving requirements placed upon the Council and further limitations on the support given.

14. Complaints

14.1. The Council is here to help and support the people of West Sussex. Services are provided as efficiently as possible and it is expected that staff are helpful, polite and explain things clearly whether on the telephone, in writing or face to face.

14.2. Sometimes things go wrong, and parents or carers may not be happy with the service they have received. We welcome comments, good and bad, as an opportunity to put things right and improve our services. Parents should let us know if they feel that the Council has failed to do something, done something wrong or acted unfairly or impolitely. We cannot investigate matters that are subject to the two-stage appeals process.

14.3. Complaints regarding the service provided on a vehicle organised by the Council, or concerns about transport arrangements should be directed to:

14.4. Email: school.transport@westsussex.gov.uk or telephone 01243 753530

14.5. Full details regarding the Councils complaints procedure can be viewed on the [make a complaint or appeal](#) webpage.

15. Summary of the application process

15.1. A summary of the overall process follows:

Apply

- Applicants should review our gateway criteria set out in section 3.1.
- Use the online form to apply and upload evidence to support your application.
- We can post you a paper form if you prefer.

Application considered

- An officer will consider the application form and any supporting evidence.
- We may contact you to find out more about the learner and their circumstances.
- We aim to inform you of a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form, but some applications can take longer to process.

Decision

- You will be informed in writing of the officer's decision.
- Needs assessment
- If the officer determines that transport is necessary, a needs assessment whilst travelling will be completed.

Organise transport

- On completion of the needs assessment, it can take up to 15 working days from submission of student timetable (where relevant) for suitable transport to be organised.
- Parent notified of the travel arrangements.

Stage 1 appeal

- If you disagree with the decision, you can request a Stage 1 appeal.
- Complete a Stage 1 appeal form.
- All Stage 1 appeals are considered by the Assistant Director for Education & Skills
- You should receive a decision within 20 working days of receipt of the application form.

Stage 2 appeal

- If you disagree with the Stage 1 decision, you can request a Stage 2 appeal.
- Complete a Stage 2 appeal form.
- All Stage 2 appeals are considered by the Transport Appeal Panel.
- The Appeal Panel will meet within 40 working days of receipt of the application form.
- You will receive a written decision from the Appeal Panel within 5 working days of the hearing