

Children's Services

Policy for Travel Assistance for Post 16 Students

2017/2020

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Date agreed:	

Purpose

The purpose of the Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy is to facilitate access to education for students aged 16-18.

Policy

The duty placed on local authorities in respect of the provision of travel assistance to post 16 students requires a travel assistance policy statement to be prepared and published in each year, by 31 May, disclosing the provision being made by the Council for this group. The Council has a discretion which it can use to offer assistance towards a person's reasonable travel needs.

The Council considers any application for travel assistance for a person of sixth form age against this policy.

Assistance will only be provided where the following circumstances apply, and the student is attending the nearest appropriate maintained establishment offering the majority of the chosen course(s), and that establishment is more than 3 miles by the shortest available walking route from the home address:

Low income families

Provide travel assistance to qualifying low income families, subject to a contribution from the student/parent of £400 per annum or £900 per annum for SEN students. This being based on 50% of the average cost of post 16 transport provision in Central Bedfordshire. The option will be available to pay this in termly instalments over the academic year.

Children from low income groups are defined as those who are entitled to free school meals, or those families whose annual taxable household income is less than £16,190* and are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

Statemented SEN students

Where a post 16 student has a statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and is attending the school named within their statement/plan as the nearest appropriate school for their post 16 education – public transport will be promoted for this group and travel training referrals will be made for all students with the expectation that they will be assessed for suitability for training by the end of the first term of post 16 education. A charge for transport will be made on a sliding scale based on the income of the family at the time of application. Low income families, as defined in (i) will be required to contribute £900 towards the cost of transport. All other applicants will be required to make a contribution of £1,800 towards the cost of transport.

Students with SEN who are no longer statemented

Those students who had a statement of SEN or EHCP in year 11 who will be attending a school or college to continue their education and require additional

support to do so. Low income families, as defined above will be required to contribute £900 towards the cost of transport. All other applicants will be required to make a contribution of £1,800 towards the cost of transport. All applications will be considered based on the evidence provided to support the claim at the time of application.

Residential placements

Where a student attends a residential school or college, travel assistance will be provided in accordance with the accommodation arrangements:

- ☐ Termly boarding
- ☐ 12 day boarding
- ☐ Weekly boarding
- ☐ 52 week placement

Termly boarding – travel assistance will be provided at the beginning and end of each term and at the beginning and end of the mid term holiday.

12 day boarding –travel assistance will be provided on alternate weekends and at the beginning and end of each term.

Weekly boarding –travel assistance will be provided on Monday and Friday each week.

52 week placement – travel assistance will be provided for three return journeys per year.

In the interests of the efficient use of resources the council will, in all cases, encourage parents/carers to transport students for which mileage reimbursement may be made. Where a Motability vehicle has been provided for the student transport assistance will be by means of mileage payment.

Any additional transport requirements to those set out above will remain the responsibility of the parent/carer.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Apprentices are paid directly by their employer and as such do not fall into the remit of this Policy.

Travel costs to and from the place of employment should be met by the employer or by the apprentice.

Traineeships are unpaid work based training. Trainees will only be eligible for travel assistance if they meet the eligibility criteria stated within this Policy. Travel assistance for Trainees will only be provided to and from the base of education.

Any travel to and from additional work placements will be the responsibility of the education provider or the trainee.

Young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training – known as ‘NEETs’

The Council’s Youth Support Service work closely with young people who are at risk of becoming NEET.

Youth Support track the progress of young people into Post 16 education, employment and training. This includes putting in place a number of interventions to proactively re-engage Young People who are NEET – including the delivery of information, advice and guidance and signposting to local services that would help secure their participation.

Youth Support also work in partnership with training providers such as 4YP to help those who are at risk of becoming NEET. For more information please go to <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/learning/youth-support-service/default.aspx>

Young parents in education

The Care to Learn Scheme is administered by Central Government and can pay towards the child care costs for young parents who are:

- ☐ under the age of 20 at the start of the course;
- ☐ the main carer for the child(ren)
- ☐ live in England
- ☐ your course qualifies
- ☐ your childcare qualifies

For more information on the Care to Learn Scheme please go to <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview> or contact your education provider directly.

Travel Assistance on grounds of medical needs

Where a student attends the nearest school or college offering the qualification and subject they are studying for, travel assistance can be considered on medical grounds when the distance between home and establishment is no more than 20 miles.

This will be calculated by the shortest available walking route if up to 3 miles or the shortest motorised route if over 3 miles. Each application is considered on an individual basis and travel assistance may be provided for short term or long term medical needs.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carers to produce evidence of the medical condition in all cases, detailing:

- ☐ full medical details of the condition, including timescales for recovery;

- written medical confirmation regarding the child's fitness to return to school;
- the likely period for which revised travel assistance arrangements may be needed;
- the type of vehicle needed, where appropriate, for example, where the child is in a full body cast;
- any manual handling risks.

This should be endorsed by the family doctor or in certain circumstances by a medical consultant. The Council reserves the right to require the parent/carer to provide further medical evidence as deemed necessary. Any charges incurred by the parent/carer in providing this evidence will not be paid by the Council.

Travel assistance will be arranged in the most cost effective way and be provided for a maximum of one term at a time.

Where agreed travel assistance will be provided to families with a low income at the subsidised rate as set out in the Council's Fees and Charges Policy. The charge will be determined at a pro rata rate for the number of weeks for which travel assistance is agreed.

Travel Assistance for children for whom Central Bedfordshire Council is a Corporate Parent

Whilst representing only a very small number of the total 16 – 18 age population, Looked After Children (including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) can be some of the most vulnerable students in need of support. The most suitable establishment to meet these particular students' needs will not always be the nearest school or college to their home address.

As Corporate Parents to these children, Central Bedfordshire Council will ensure that travel assistance will be provided for students to attend the most suitable establishment to meet their individual needs, irrespective of distance.

Other Students

Other students will be able to purchase passes from the Local Authority but this will be on a full cost recovery basis and only on existing routes, in place at the time of application, where capacity allows. Bespoke transport or individual taxis will not be provided. Families would be able to take advantage of the bulk purchasing power of the Council and pay a reduced rate for transport on existing services.

Amplification of the policy

General terms of provision

1. Whilst the Council is not required, by law, to provide support for the transport of Post 16 students, it continues to provide assistance in this area. Eligibility will be conditional upon the student attending, on a full time basis at the nearest establishment offering the majority of the course.
2. The travel assistance provided to eligible students should be the most cost effective to the Council and will take the form of a travel pass to use on an existing school contract bus, public bus or train.
3. Taxis will not be provided. The only exceptions to this will be for those students with severe physical or learning difficulties where, upon receipt of sufficient evidence, taxi provision will be considered alongside other options such as Independent Travel Training or a Personal Transport Budget.
4. Connecting transport will not be provided to a pick-up point (e.g. bus stop or railway station) that is less than 3 miles from the student's home address. Where connecting transport is provided it will be in the form of existing public or school contract transport only. Central Bedfordshire Council will not procure new vehicles in the absence of existing transport routes. Where there is no existing transport in place students/parents will be responsible for travel arrangements to the nearest pick-up point regardless of distance.
5. In the absence of any existing public or school contract transport to a pick up point, upon request, a fuel allowance of 17p per mile can be considered (to and from that point) providing the journey is over 3 miles. This will be up to a maximum claim of £4.95
6. The legal requirement to provide transport assistance where the route is deemed unavailable to be walked, accompanied as necessary, only applies to students of statutory school age. Therefore, such circumstances will not confer an entitlement to transport assistance for post 16 students.
7. Where students wish to attend colleges outside of Central Bedfordshire transport will be provided to the nearest mainline station to the students address. Students will be responsible for making their own arrangements from the mainline station to their respective college/sixth form.
8. Transport services will not be tailored to meet individual timetables but consideration will be given whenever possible to minimise inconvenience to students. Specific transport will not be provided if the public or contract school bus timetables are not in line with that of the student. In such circumstances students are expected to make suitable adjustments to their travel arrangements.

9. In situations where, as a result of the course chosen by the student, the journey time is lengthy, whilst transport assistance will still be provided, the student/parent will be responsible for managing that journey.
10. Transport assistance is not provided to learners undertaking work placements, apprenticeships or traineeships. In these circumstances learners are advised to contact their employer or learner provider.

Age

To be eligible for assistance a student must be under 19 years of age at the beginning of the first year of their course. For courses starting in the autumn term the academic year starts on 1 September. For the avoidance of doubt, a student who has already attained or will attain the age of 19 on or before 31 August in the calendar year of their first application for assistance with Post 16 transport will not be eligible for support from the scheme. Any student aged 19 or over on 31 August in the calendar year of their application, will only be eligible to apply for support if they can demonstrate explicitly that their course is a continuation of one on which they have already successfully completed the first year of study, having started the course prior to attaining the age of 19. The onus will be on the student to prove continuous study.

If a student is 19 or over and is attending a course as part of a formal or informal care plan, and is not eligible for support from the Post 16 transport scheme, they will need to seek support from an alternative funder/provider for the transport necessary to enable them to access that course.

Where the course the student is studying is on a split site transport will only be provided to eligible students to the main qualifying campus.

For students with a current statement of special educational needs, the school named in this statement will be considered the appropriate establishment to the students' home address provided the school named in the statement was determined by the Statutory Assessment Service.

Where parents have asked for a school to be named, transport will remain the responsibility of the parent.

If a student has been entitled to travel assistance to a specialist school for their statutory school years and they are continuing their education at this school they will continue to be entitled to travel assistance (on payment of the charge) as it will be considered that this school is the nearest establishment that offers the course the student is pursuing and that can best meet their needs.

If the student was originally awarded travel assistance to school as an exception to the usual policy, there is no automatic entitlement for assistance to continue. Such cases will be assessed individually under current policies. If additional information is submitted to support such applications, this will be taken into consideration at the time of assessment.

Where a student has been entitled to travel assistance to a specialist school for their statutory school years and they have decided to move to another establishment to complete their schooling they will not automatically be entitled to travel assistance. Their application will be assessed according to the Post 16 Transport Policy and from the information we have received from their school.

16 to 18 Bursary Fund

Education providers have access to the 16 to 18 Bursary which young people can access. This is split into two types of bursary; the Discretionary Bursary and the Vulnerable Student Bursary.

Young people can apply for the Discretionary Bursary if they are not eligible for assistance through their local authority. Applications for this are made directly to the education provider and the local authority are not involved in the decision making process.

The Vulnerable Student Bursary may be open to those who:

- ☐ Are in or have recently left local authority care;
- ☐ Get income support or universal credit in the name of the young person;
- ☐ The young person is disabled and gets both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their name.

Some establishments also provide a Discretionary Hardship Bursary for exceptional circumstances. Please contact your education provider for more details.

Each education provider administers these bursaries differently and the Council would advise young people to contact the Student Support Services at the college or school prior to their course starting to investigate any options which may be open to them.

Independent Travel Training

Students who are assessed as able to receive Independent Travel Training will be offered this training. This will help the students become more independent and confident in their everyday lives and give them skills for life. If the training is successful the student will be provided with the appropriate ticket for the transport and route they have been trained on and will be expected to use this method to get from home to school/college. Taxis will not be provided to students once successful training has been completed.

Alternative provision

The Council actively encourage young people to explore alternative transport provisions before applying for assistance through this Policy.

The Council works in partnership with Travel Choices, Bikeability and Scootability to offer alternatives to young people who wish to use public transport, cycles or scooters to get to their place of education. For more information please visit the Council's website www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Young people are also advised to explore public transport options to facilitate their attendance. Traveline offer advice on public transportation such as rail and bus services. Further information is available at www.travelineeastanglia.co.uk people may wish to contact public operators directly to explore the options of reduced fares which may be open to those who are in post 16 education.

Further information can be found at:

- Arriva - <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/south-east/bus-tickets/multi-journeysaver-tickets-in-the-south-east/bedfordshire/>
- Stagecoach - <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/about/east>
- Grant Palmer - <http://www.grantpalmer.com/>
- Centrebus - <http://www.centrebus.info/Pages/Bedfordshire.aspx>

For those who have access to a Motability vehicle, the Council can pay a mileage allowance towards your journey to school or college. This can aid in a student's independence and allows for a more flexible journey to and from the place of education.

Changes to the Policy

Should any significant changes be proposed to this policy or associated policies, the Council will carry out the necessary consultation processes in line with the relevant Department for Education guidance; giving schools, parents, colleges and young people the opportunity to comment. Details will, as a minimum, be available on the Council's website.

Appeals

Decisions regarding the eligibility for travel assistance, the mode of assistance, and other practical matters of travel assistance will only be taken by authorised Council staff. If a parent/carer is unhappy with a decision that has been made, that parent/carer should first take it up informally with the officer or Department that made the original decision. If it is necessary to put the query in writing, then the Council will offer assistance with this in the case of a parent/carer with a disability.

If the matter is not resolved informally in this way, then the parent/carer will be required to complete a *Transport Appeal Form* (TAF1) which can be downloaded

from the Council website. Alternatively a copy of the form can be requested from the Transport Commissioning and Entitlement Team (See appendix B). The TAF1 form must be submitted within 20 working days of receipt of the original transport decision being made by the Council.

The completed form should then be returned to the Transport Team. The Team Leader together with another Children's Services officer will review the initial decision and further information submitted. This will be completed within 20 working days of receipt of the TAF1 form.

It is anticipated that the majority of appeals will be resolved at this stage. If the appeal is unsuccessful the parent will receive a copy of the appeal form with the reasons given for the decision.

If the matter remains unresolved the parent/carer can make a further appeal to the Transport Eligibility Panel. Appeals must be submitted, using the TAF2 form available on the website, directly to the Appeals Clerk, within 20 working days of the receipt of the decision of the first appeal considered by the Transport Team. When submitting the completed TAF2 form, parents/carers must also submit the decision letter received as the result of the initial appeal. The Transport Eligibility Panel consists of 3 people who are independent and who have volunteered for the role. They are not paid and are not associated with the Council or a school connected with the appeal except as an independent panel member. They are trained in all aspects of this Policy and will make decisions within its remit. A Clerk will be present to minute the hearing and will write to parents with the decision made by the Transport Eligibility Panel.

Parents/carers must submit all evidence to the Appeals Clerk 10 working days before your appeal is due to be held. Information on how and where to submit this evidence is on the TAF2. Evidence received after this will only be considered with the agreement of the Panel and late evidence may result in the appeal being moved to a later date.

Parents/carers are invited to verbally represent their case to the Panel. A maximum of 2 adults are able to attend a hearing. These can be both parents/carers or 1 parent and 1 supporter. An interpreter or signer may be provided if requested on the TAF2 form. No children may attend.

A member of the Transport Team will also be present to explain the reasons why transport, or the particular provision requested, had been refused.

The Panel will consider the information provided on the TAF2 form and any additional evidence provided by the parent/carer, as well representation from the Transport Team. Appeals panels will be arranged as soon as is possible within 40 working days. The necessary documents will be provided to parents and the panel at least 5 working days before the appeal date, unless a shorter period is agreed beforehand. The outcome of the appeal will be advised to the parent/carer in writing within 5 working days of the appeal hearing.

Where parents/carers have a disability which may impact on their ability to attend a hearing, or if they require assistance with language interpretation or reading,

appropriate assistance will be provided by the Council if it is identified on the TAF2 form.

Where parents have a disability which may impact on their ability to attend a hearing or if they require assistance with language interpretation or reading, appropriate assistance will be provided by the Council.

Where the pupil in question holds a statement of special educational needs or EHCP, it may be that a disagreement about travel is part of a wider question of school provision and placement. In such an instance, it may be necessary for the matter to be considered by a Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. Although this body does not hear appeals specifically about transport, it may consider it as part of a wider appeal.

The Appeals Process detailed above does not prevent the parent/carer raising a school transport related issue with a local Councillor or any other person.

107. Where a parent/carer feels that an appeal has not been conducted in a fair manner, he or she may pursue a complaint using the Council's complaints procedure. (See point 106-108 below).

Change of Address

Where a student changes address during their Post 16 course they must re-apply to the scheme and will be re-assessed using their new address details. All the policy criteria will continue to apply. E.g. if the chosen establishment is no longer the nearest offering the course the student will no longer be entitled to assistance. If there are exceptional reasons why the move is necessary an application may be made for special consideration (see appeals)

Payment of charges

Students who fulfil the Council's criteria for assisted transport will have to contribute to the cost of their transport. All participants in the scheme will be required to pay an annual charge dependent on their circumstances. This can be paid termly in advance or in full for the year.

The following criteria will qualify the family as a low income family:

- The household is in receipt of Child Tax Credit/Working Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £16,190,
- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based)
- Pension Guarantee Credit equivalent to/less than Jobseekers Allowance (Income Based).
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance

The assessment is based on household income. There are no grounds on which an individual is exempt from the charge. For the purposes of the assessment of household income, this includes all sources of income to the household as a whole and only Disability Living Allowance will be disregarded. Documentary evidence

demonstrating income and benefit entitlement must be provided to support such a request.

If you qualify under low income criteria your circumstances change part way through the year you must let us know.

Parental Choice

Where a parent has decided that they do not wish for their child to go to the school or college that the SEND Team has decided can meet the student's needs and decide to seek a placement at an alternative establishment, travel assistance will not be provided. The implications of transporting their son/daughter to an establishment other than the school which has been assessed as nearest school that can meet a child's needs should be considered and alternative arrangements should be made.

Residence

To qualify for assistance from the scheme a student must ordinarily be resident in the UK with settled status, living within the administrative boundaries of Central Bedfordshire Council at the time of their application.

The DfE has determined that asylum seekers and refugees and their children must be provided with transport in accordance with policy to access provision appropriate to their age, abilities and aptitudes. Such applicants will be considered for assistance under the terms of the scheme provided they are living within the administrative boundaries of Central Bedfordshire Council at the time of their application.

Deadline for applications

For Post 16 Transport Applications an application window will operate between 1 March until 30 September each year for new starters which then reopens for 1 January to close again on 31 January in each academic year. We will consider circumstances of applications made outside of this window where someone's circumstances changed unexpectedly (e.g. a house move or drop in income).

Reimbursement of the Charge

If transport assistance is no longer required part way through a term, a partial reimbursement of the charge may apply, provided all tickets/passes have been returned and are received within the timescales stated in the table below. When calculating a reimbursement for tickets/passes received after the first day of a term an administrative charge of £60 will apply. The following levels of refund will be payable after the administration charge has been taken.

Length of time ticket/pass has been used	Refund Due
Up to 4 weeks	75%
4 to 8 weeks	50%
Over 8 weeks	0%

Complaints/Queries

If a parent/carer has a query or is dissatisfied by any aspect with regard to the determination of eligibility/entitlement for travel assistance, this should initially be brought to the attention of the Transport Team.

Queries/complaints relating to journey planning, standard/condition of vehicles, drivers, passenger assistants and any other issues relating to the journey to/from school should initially be brought to the attention of the Transport Team (see appendix B).

If the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction it may be escalated via the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/local-government-in-central-bedfordshire/customer-feedback/default.aspx

Contact details

To discuss:

- ☐ entitlement to transport
- ☐ an application for transport
- ☐ amend or cancel transport
- ☐ change in medical needs, behavioural needs or additional support
- ☐ change in existing timetable (part time or post 16 pupils only)
- ☐ or if you wish to discuss the method of transport offered

Then please contact a Transport Officer at:

Tel: 0300 300 8339

Email: school.transport@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Address: Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF

If your child attends a mainstream school or college and you have a question about one for the following:

- ☐ the condition of the vehicle
- ☐ vehicle arriving early or late
- ☐ behaviour of the driver or passenger assistant
- ☐ location of pick up or drop off points
- ☐ an incident of bad behaviour
- ☐ or any other concerns in relation to the service that is allocated

Then please contact Transport Team at:

Tel: 0300 300 8167

Email: mainstream.transport@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Address: Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ

If your child attends a special school or accesses alternative transport provisions due to their special educational needs and you have a question about one of the following operational issues including:

- ☐ condition of the vehicle
- ☐ the vehicle arriving early or late
- ☐ behaviour of the driver or passenger assistant
- ☐ a new wheelchair or change in an existing wheelchair
- ☐ transporting equipment

Then please contact the Transport Team at:

Tel: 0300 300 6969

Email: Sen.transport@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Transport Team, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford,
Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ

If you wish to make any other enquiries or to make a complaint

The please contact Customer relations:

Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ

Tel: 0300 300 6077 or 0300 300 4995

Email: customer.relations@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk