



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Travel Assistance Policy for young people
resident in Wokingham post-16, including young
people with SEND**

Academic Year 2023/24

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Introduction

This policy covers Travel Assistance to help young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), who may have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and who are over statutory school age specifically to access appropriate education and training.

This assistance is available to all young people who satisfy the eligibility criteria aged 16 to 18 entering further education, and to continuing learners aged 19 to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

This document is Wokingham Borough Council's Transport Policy Statement which the statutory guidance issued in 2014 (as updated in January 2019) for Post 16 transport to education and training requires every local authority to publish each year. We are required to identify what travel assistance is available to support young people aged 16 - 18 and learners aged 19 -25 with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, who access school or further education institutions. The legislation and guidance for Travel Assistance to education is different for those of 16 - 18 and those over the age of 19. As a result, and for clarity, the two age groups have been separated in this policy.

There is no automatic entitlement to free home to school or college Travel Assistance once a young person is over compulsory school age. However, in support of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) and Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) the Council offers a discretionary service to young people meeting the agreed eligibility criteria. This ensures that the Council supports and encourages young people to continue with their education and training where this is appropriate and suitable to their needs. This will enable young people to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for their personal development, to support preparation for adulthood, and wherever possible progression into employment or Higher Education.

This policy applies to all students participating in the scheme and supersedes all previous transport arrangements and entitlements.

The Travel Assistance Policy Statement will be reviewed annually. This version covers the academic year from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023.

General Principles

This policy is based on the following principles:

Independence and wellbeing

Our commitment is to support and prepare every young person for adulthood, including those young people with Special Educational needs or disability through the development and promotion of individual independence, facilitating opportunities for social inclusion as well as supporting the physical well-being for all young people. Travel assistance, and the form this takes, is a key contributor to achieving these goals.

Sustainability

The council will favour environmentally sustainable forms of travel, including walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The council will also promote those options which make the most effective use of public resources.

In order to support a young person's needs and assisting them to develop greater independence for adulthood, a range of travel options will be explored when deciding what form of travel assistance will be

offered. All pupils should be encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle including walking a reasonable distance to college/sixth form, where possible.

Section 1: Travel Assistance Offered by External Organisations

The Council seeks to support all Post 16 students to continue with their education and training by negotiating preferential rates of travel with some rail and bus operators. Through running this scheme and providing information about the Bursary funding available to support student access to education through their Post 16 education provider (FE Colleges and school 6th Forms), the Council considers it has met its statutory duties with regard to the majority of students.

Concessionary fares schemes available

For public transport routes, the Council negotiates favourable terms (in conjunction with the other 5 Berkshire Unitary Authorities) with local transport providers. This ensures that students can buy passes at agreed rates, including those for travel to establishments outside the Borough and/or the County. These include, rail passes throughout the County and beyond, travel on Reading Buses and Courtney Buses, as well as access to a wide range of dedicated school and college routes within the borough and peripheral areas.

The parent/young person should check for themselves the cost of season tickets and compare the rates that the Council can obtain before selecting the best value for their own travel arrangements.

If, having purchased an annual ticket for transport it is then decided that your child no longer wishes to attend this setting, refunds will be available on the following basis:

- Notification received by the Community Transport Unit in writing prior to the end of the Autumn Term – refund of 2 terms
- Notification received by the Community Transport Unit in writing prior to the end of the Spring Term – refund of 1 term

Bursaries available from your Education Provider

Students should contact their school, sixth form college, or further education college to find out about financial and other support available, for example help with Childcare or other costs. Alternatively contact the Learner Support Helpline on 0800 121 8989.

Below is a summary of some of the main financial support available.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, administered by individual education providers, is available to support any young person who faces genuine financial barriers to participation in education, including transport costs. All education providers must make available a copy of their 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy. Applications should be made directly to the education provider.

For further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund visit: www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund. Key Local providers and contact details are listed in Appendix B or on the Council Local Offer website.

There are two types of 16-19 bursary available.

Vulnerable Student Bursary

Those in most need are eligible for a vulnerable student bursary of up to £1,200 per year. To qualify, the young person must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The young person is in or recently left local authority care
- The young person gets Income Support (or Universal Credit in place of Income Support) in their name
- The young person is disabled and gets both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (or Universal Credit in place of ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independent Payment (PIP) in their name

To receive the maximum bursary the programme of study must last for 30 weeks or more. If the programme is shorter than 30 weeks, the young person may receive less.

Discretionary Bursary

The young person could be eligible for a discretionary bursary if they do not qualify for the vulnerable student bursary. Education providers may, at their discretion, distribute any remaining funds to a young person in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of the young person. This is targeted at young people facing financial barriers to participation, including transport costs.

Residential Support Scheme

The Residential Support Scheme is for young persons aged 16-18. If the programme of study being followed is not available locally and is more than 15 miles from the home, or more than two hours return journey away, the young person can apply for help with the cost of term-time accommodation.

How much assistance the young person receives will depend on household income and where the education provider is based.

Please note that different terms apply if a residential placement has been agreed through a young person's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). For more details see Section 2.

For further information on the Residential Support Scheme, including eligibility criteria, visit:

www.gov.uk/residential-support-scheme

Residential Bursary Fund

Young persons aged 16-18 may be able to get a bursary towards the cost of accommodation from some specialist residential colleges. This is different from the Residential Support Scheme.

Most of these colleges are 'Specialist Residential Centres' for subjects like agriculture, art and design or horticulture. Each has its own eligibility criteria, often including parental income. To apply for assistance you should contact the college directly.

Discretionary Learner Support

If the young person is aged 19 or over, on a further education course and facing financial hardship, they could get Discretionary Learner Support (DLS). This is similar to the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

The young person must apply directly to their learning provider (e.g. your college) for DLS. How much the young person receives will depend on their circumstances. The money can help with learning costs, including transport.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support

Local providers and contact details are listed in Appendix B or on the Wokingham Borough Council Local Offer website.

Care to Learn

You can get Care to Learn if all of the following apply to you:

- you're a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you're the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you're either a British citizen or have a legal right to live and study in England
- your course qualifies
- your childcare provider qualifies

Care to Learn is only available for publicly funded courses in England. This includes courses that take place in:

- schools
- sixth-forms in schools
- sixth-form colleges
- other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning
- your community at Children's Centres

Your learning provider can tell you if your course is eligible.

Care to Learn will pay towards your childcare costs

To qualify, your childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted.

They can be a:

- childminder
- preschool playgroup
- day nursery
- out of school club

You cannot get Care to Learn if:

- you're an apprentice who gets a salary
- you're doing a higher education course at university

You can find more information at:

<https://studentbursary.education.gov.uk/w/webpage/student-bursary>

or email: caretolearn@studentbursary.education.gov.uk

Special educational needs and disability information advice and support service (SENDIASS)

give help, support and information to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25.

- Call: 0118 908 8233
- Email: sendiass@wokingham.gov.uk

Section 2: Travel Assistance for Sixth Form (academic years 12 and 13, young people aged 16-18) including young people with SEND

2.1 Statutory duty and definitions

There is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide travel assistance beyond the completion of Year 11. The Council will only consider providing support and assistance with transport costs in exceptional circumstances. Therefore, parents and carers should ensure that they are aware of the cost of transport and take this into account when making choices for their young person's Post 16 education.

Cases will be decided on an individual case and the Authority will consider any supporting evidence provided as part of a request together with a completed transport application form. If eligible, Travel Assistance will only be provided to the nearest suitable education and /or training provider for learners, and is subject to funding in relation to the published eligibility criteria outlined below.

Travel Assistance will not be provided if it is deemed that suitable provision is available at a closer learning provider as measured from the home address.¹

Those who are eligible for travel assistance, whether from home or from a pick-up point, will be charged a fee each academic year as a contribution towards their travel arrangements. Fees for each new academic year can be found on the Local Authority website at: <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

This charge will be reduced for those who meet low-income criteria. Eligibility for free school meals will continue to be the primary means of determining low income. Evidence of low income will be required; this will usually be a letter from HMRC or the Benefits Agency.

Travel assistance arrangements will only be provided upon receipt of payment of the relevant charge or on receipt of evidence of low income.

2.2 Eligibility Criteria

A young person may be eligible for travel assistance under the Sixth Form duty if all the following statements apply to them:

- a) The young person is a resident within the Wokingham Unitary Authority area and is over 16 and under the age of 19 years of age or, if they are over 19, are continuing with a course that they started before their 19th birthday
- b) They have a special educational need or disability, which may be identified in an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or other exceptional circumstances which impacts on their ability to use public transport arrangements, and fall into **one** of these categories:

¹ The nearest suitable learning provider is defined as the closest school or college to the home address able to meet the young person's educational needs. If parents choose to send their young person to a school or college which is not the nearest suitable, assistance with transport will not be provided by the Council. These distances are measured by the nearest available walking route, and verified by the Council, or its agents, by appropriate means which might include the use of computer generated mapping systems. The Council views these distances as an exact measure and they cannot be considered as marginal. The measurements are taken from the curtilage (the front edge of a property) of the home to the main entrance of the learning provider.

- (i) Have an offer of a place at a local Post 16 provider which the Local Authority agree can make the appropriate educational/training provision and are not able to travel independently or safely.
 - (ii) Be able to demonstrate a need for additional time in education to complete education and training at their current educational establishment and are not able to travel independently or safely.
 - (iii) Have entitlement based on the criteria as a Low Income Family
- c) Show that their learning provider is the **nearest** provider that can meet their needs including those specified in an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and that the provision requested is not available at an establishment closer to home
- d) Their study programme is full-time – equivalent to minimum of 12 hours per week, usually across at least 3 days per week for the duration of the course
- e) Their chosen study programme takes place at one of the following:
- A school (including Academies).
 - A further education institution.
 - An Authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education.
 - An establishment funded directly by the YPLS (e.g. Independent Specialist Providers) for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
 - A learning provider that is funded by the Local Authority which leads to a positive outcome (this could include colleges, charities and private learning providers).

A young person can apply for council travel assistance in addition to the options provided by other organisations, but any support received from other sources will be taken into account when assessing what form of travel assistance is most appropriate.

Please note, travel assistance will not be provided under this section for young people who have left education and are returning after the age of 19. Those re-starting education after their 19th birthday will be assessed as adults.

2.3 Exclusions

A young person will not be eligible for travel assistance if any of the following statements apply:

- a) Their chosen study programme takes place at a privately-funded organisation and is not supported by the Local Authority;
- b) The young person is employed and starting or continuing an apprenticeship.
- c) The young person's study programme is at Level 4 or higher, including a foundation degree. Education levels are explained on the government website.
- d) The travel assistance required is for the purpose of accessing work experience and/or work placements.
- e) The young person is over the age of 19 and is returning to education having previously left education (as stated in the section above, those re-starting education after their 19th birthday will be assessed as adults).
- f) The required travel charge is not paid.

2.4 Assessing Applications for Travel Assistance

Following careful and thorough assessment, the Council will decide whether a young person is eligible for travel assistance or not. They are also responsible for deciding what form of travel assistance should be offered based on individual needs, promoting independence, encouraging social inclusion and efficient use of resources.

The following will be considered when deciding which form of travel assistance to offer:

- Whether the young person has a physical or medical disability that rules out the use of suitable public transport - for example students who require specialist seating, harness, head restraints or other specialist facilities.
- If the young person is currently in receipt of travel assistance support from other sources, e.g. mobility allowance, direct payment and awards under the 16-19 bursary fund.

Priority will be given to young people who have no other forms of transport or travel assistance available to them.

Existing sources of support must be identified at the point of application. These will be taken into account when making a decision about the level and type of travel assistance that may be provided.

A decision may be taken that additional travel assistance will not be provided.

2.5 Payment

If you are assessed as eligible under the Council's policy, a charge towards the cost of Travel Assistance will be applied. Details of the charge for each new Academic Year can be found on the Local Authority website at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

There will be a discount of 50% for young people who are eligible for free school meals.

The payment can also be made in 10 monthly instalments.

Payment will be taken by Direct Debit from your Bank Account. The Direct Debit mandate is attached to the application form, and must be completed before the application can be processed. If you do not have a bank account you should contact the Community Transport Unit to discuss how payment can be made.

2.6 Low Income Entitlement

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 defines low income as those eligible for free school meals or whose parents/carers are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

In April 2018, the criteria used to determine which pupils are eligible for free school meals were updated to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit and the phasing out of other income-based benefits. Working Tax Credit will gradually be phased out as recipients are transferred to Universal Credit. However, until such

time as all recipients have transferred, receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit can still be used to determine low income.

The law makes provision for young people of the families on low income to receive transport assistance, subject to the payment of the appropriate contribution, in the following circumstances:

- Applicants will be required to provide relevant documents to prove their eligibility to assistance with transport.
- Once eligibility on income grounds has been confirmed the young person will be considered eligible (on these grounds) for the school year for which the assessment has been made. However, if other circumstances change, for example they move house, then eligibility will be re-assessed. It is parent's responsibility to inform the Transport Team of any change of circumstances.
- Income assessments will be carried out on an annual basis.

Those students who are over 19 years and receive benefits in their own rights will be assessed as an individual on the grounds of low income.

Further information about eligibility for free school meals can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals>

2.7 Refund Process

If you no longer require travel assistance from the Council you may be able to apply for a refund of part of the parental contribution. You must tell the Community Transport Unit, in writing what date you want your travel assistance provision to stop. Refunds will be calculated based on the length of time you were in receipt of the provision, using the date of ceasing transport or the date the cancellation was requested in writing, whichever was the later.

A refund of the full term's charge will only be considered if cancellation of provision is received in the office prior to the start of a term.

No refund will be made if you withdraw during the summer term.

The following table shows how refunds will be calculated for part of a term.

Length of time in receipt of provision/from beginning of term	Refund Due
Up to 4 weeks	75%
4 to 8 weeks	50%
Over 8 weeks	0%

Section 3

Eligibility for Travel Assistance for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), between 19 and 25.

This section clarifies the Council policy regarding travel assistance for students with SEND who are starting a new educational course after their 19th Birthday.

Eligibility for Post 19 SEND Travel Assistance

When a student with an Education, Health and Care Plan who is above the age of 19 and below the age of 25 years, starts a new course of education, an assessment is made (reflecting the Council's obligations under both the Care Act 2014 and the Education Act 1996, s 508F,) to determine whether it is necessary for the council (rather than the student/family) to make their travel arrangements.

In the most exceptional cases, students with learning difficulties or disabilities may be eligible for Travel Assistance where there is no other way for them to access their educational placement.

Each case will be considered under this policy and Travel Assistance will only be considered if the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The student is normally resident within the Wokingham Unitary Authority area
2. The student is attending a full-time educational course (12 hours per week or more over at least 3 days per week) at the nearest suitable or most accessible college to their home. If a similar suitable course is offered by a FE provider nearer to their home the student will not be eligible for assistance
3. The placement must be supported and named in their EHCP
4. The course must be at Level 3 or below. Those commencing a course at Level 4 or above, including Foundation Degree and Degree, would normally be expected to utilise Student Loans, grants and other student benefits to facilitate their transport requirements
5. The course will start on or after the student's 19th Birthday, and may continue no later than the academic year in which the young person reaches 25 years-old
6. The young person together with their family or carers have actively and positively engaged with supporting the young person towards being able to travel independently, where appropriate
7. The young person is over the age of 19 and is starting a new course of study (in which case the Travel Assistance will be provided free of charge)

The Council will take into account the following factors when assessing whether travel assistance is necessary including:

1. The young person's age, ability, aptitudes and SEND, including the length and complexity of the journey
2. The purpose and intended outcomes of the education/training
3. What other arrangements you have considered or tried and why they are not suitable
4. Whether the student is unable to travel to their placement by public transport, either unaccompanied or accompanied by a responsible adult. Specific and up to date evidence

of this from relevant health and/or appropriate educational professionals supporting the student will be required

5. Whether there is a family member/carer who is able to transport or accompany the student. If the decision has been taken not to accompany the young person please provide details of why this would not be a reasonable arrangement to make
6. What other efforts have been made to financially support the young person to access education, e.g. grants, bursaries and other benefits and allowances
7. Whether the student is in receipt of higher rate mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance, the purpose of which is to assist those who have mobility problems, with severe difficulty walking or who need help getting around outside. We would expect this benefit to be fully utilised to meet their transport needs and this includes transport to their educational or training placement; if there are any factors limiting its use you should provide details of them to help inform appropriate decision-making about Travel Assistance
8. Where there is a 'Motability' vehicle available to the student, but a decision has been made not to use the 'Motability' vehicle to support the student to reach their education placement, we would normally expect the carer/student to make their own appropriate alternative arrangements. If this is not possible/reasonable, further details will need to be provided to inform the decision-making process
9. Any other exceptional circumstances that you consider need to be taken into account, together with any recent supporting evidence that you provide

Please note that we would not generally consider work or childcare commitments as an exceptional reason for travel assistance to be provided for young people with SEND aged 16+.

Based on the assessment, if the student has alternative means to support transport to educational provision the Council is unlikely to provide travel assistance.

However, if the assessment identifies that a student does not have any other way of getting to the educational provision the Council will continue to provide Travel Assistance.

Students undertaking a work-based learning programme such as an apprenticeship should apply for Access to Work funding to support their transport needs, using the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Section 4: Further Details on Travel Assistance Which Apply to All Age Groups

4.1. Limitations for travel assistance

1. Where transport is provided, the journey will be limited to the start and end of the standard college/sixth form day. This may mean that the young person will need to arrive earlier than their first lesson, or to wait at the end of their timetabled day for other young people
2. Where a young person's timetable does not fit with the times of other pupils attending the same provision, a mileage reimbursement will be offered for all or part of the travel provision
3. The Council does not provide travel assistance for:
 - a. Work experience or work placements,
 - b. Medical appointments or other off-site visits
 - c. Transfer between sites or campuses during the college/school day
 - d. Before or after college/school activities and clubs
 - e. Return of a young person home early if they have been taken ill, or are unable to stay at college/school to the end of the day

Responsibility for Travel Assistance in these situations will remain with the parents/ carers or the college/school to arrange.

4. Reimbursements for travel expenses incurred prior to the date of application will not be considered.

4.2 Young people attending residential schools

For those young people with special educational needs and disabilities who attend residential colleges on a termly basis and are eligible for Travel Assistance, the council will support:

- one journey at the start of each term; and
- one journey at the end of each term

The council will usually offer a mileage reimbursement or direct payment for the young person to travel in a parent or carer's vehicle. There may however be exceptional cases where specialist transport or other travel patterns may be considered.

4.3 Multiple home addresses

When assessing a young person's application, the Council will use the young person's 'main residence' for assessment purposes. The "main residence" is the address at which the young person spends most school nights. Where a young person has two home addresses then entitlement will be assessed from their 'main residence' only. Where parents are separated or divorced, entitlement is assessed from the home where the young person spends the majority of their time. Where a young person spends equal amounts of school/college days with each parent, travelling from two addresses to school/college, entitlement will be assessed from both addresses. Evidence may be required.

4.4 Review of eligibility

If a young person is assessed as not eligible for Travel Assistance, the Council will not be obliged to re-assess the individual for the remainder of that academic year, unless the place of residence or education changes, except where an appeal is lodged in line with the Appeals procedure.

All Travel Assistance offered is subject to annual review, in line with Education Funding Agency Guidelines, and it is at the discretion of the Council.

4.5 Duration of provision

All post 16 students need to re-apply for Travel Assistance each year, even where they are on a continuing or multiple year course. **Please note that provision of Travel Assistance in a previous year is no guarantee of entitlement to ongoing provision of Travel Assistance.**

Details of how to apply, can be found on the Local Authority website at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

Travel Assistance arrangements will stay in place for the academic year in which they were assessed as eligible, unless the award was specifically for a shorter period or there are significant changes, e.g. change of home address.

Where specialist transport is provided, whilst the form of travel assistance will not change, sometimes during the year collection/drop off times and/or the route on which the young person travels may change. We will endeavour to keep change to a minimum, but where a change is required we will aim to inform you with as much notice as possible.

If the young person changes college, (including college site), course, or home address, or their needs change, you will need to re-apply for Travel Assistance. Alterations will not be made to your current provision until the re-assessment has been completed.

4.6 Forms of Travel Assistance offered

Where the Travel Assistance is offered by the Council, it may take one of the following forms:

- Independent Travel Training to help the young person learn to travel independently including by public transport. This is usually a 10 to 12-week programme of one-to-one assistance and support which is tailored to the young person's needs;
- Mileage reimbursements or direct payment for young people, or their parents or carers, to arrange their own transport, or use a combination of options including topping up bursary payments;
- A seat on a dedicated school bus or minibus where this is appropriate;
- Specialist Transport for those young people in exceptional circumstances with the greatest need and where there is no other transport or travel option available to them. This may be from a collection point or from near home and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

In some cases we have also provided Travel Buddies and Walking Assistants, and we will continue to do so where this form of assistance is deemed appropriate.

You should be aware that we do not provide Passenger Assistants as standard for young people over the age of 16. If the young person is unable to travel without supervision and they are not attending a school or college on dedicated transport shared with younger pupils, for whom a PA is provided, you will be offered a mileage reimbursement or direct payment, and will be expected to make suitable arrangements for the supervision of the young person.

4.7 Independent Travel Training

The Council is committed to supporting all children and young people to achieve their maximum potential, and become as independent as they are able to be.

In order to better support young people to travel independently, the Council may offer Independent Travel Training (ITT) in their travel assistance offer. The training will support the young person to learn the necessary skills to allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport.

A trainer will travel and work with the young person on a 1:1 basis to ensure that the skills taught are understood and put in to practice independently. Training may include:

- Timetables (including time management).
- Orientation.
- Road Safety.
- Accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets).
- Communication.
- Personal Safety (including what-if scenarios).
- Travel planning and preparation.

Where the Community Transport Unit identify that a young person may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training programme, a formal assessment will be undertaken to help create a personalised travel plan and identify what training would be required. Training programmes last on average 12 weeks, and the young person will only complete the training once the trainer and the young person, together with their family/carer agree that they have gained the necessary skills to travel on public transport on their own.

Once a young person is deemed capable of independent travel no further Travel Assistance will be offered except in exceptional circumstances.

4.8 Mileage reimbursements

This option may be of particular interest to you if:

- the young person has complex needs and you wanted to make your own travel arrangements;
- you wanted to combine the council's contribution with your personal finances, and other benefits or bursaries to provide the young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with your family circumstances;
- The young person is attending a course, all or part of which is outside the normal school day

If you were offered this form of travel assistance, it would be your responsibility to ensure that your travel arrangements enable the young person:

- to travel safely;
- to attend college regularly and on time;
- to be effectively educated once they arrive at college.

Attendance levels will be monitored and money will be reclaimed for non-attendance at college.

4.9 Specialist Transport

Wherever possible specialist transport is planned to collect several young people from agreed collection points into the same college/sixth form. Where appropriate, vehicles may also collect young people attending different educational establishments, for an effective use of resources.

You should be aware that as young people join or leave the college/sixth form your pick-up and drop-off times may change. We will try to keep these changes to a minimum, and to give you as much notice as possible of any changes.

We do not provide Passenger Assistants as standard on Post 16 transport although some routes to sixth form placements may have a Passenger Assistant where the route also carries younger children.

All staff, including the driver will be DBS checked and appropriately trained. Transport will be provided by a qualified, registered transport provider, working to contractual standards set by the Council.

4.10 Collection Points

The Council uses collection points to support the development of independence and preparation for adulthood in our young people. The use of Collection Points also assists the Council to keep journey times for young people to a minimum whilst also minimising timing changes.

The Council will aim to use an approved location near local points of interest as a collection point. This may include libraries, health centres, public Bus Stops, shops, or outside nearby schools or colleges. Collection points will be individually assessed for suitability to ensure they are safe and appropriate locations for the collection of 1 or more passengers.

If the young person's Travel Assistance offer requires them to walk to a collection point, then it is expected that an adult will accompany them where necessary. Collection points will be a reasonable distance from the young person's home address. We will aim to use collection points that are no more than ½ mile from the home and it is expected that most collection points will be significantly closer. The distance and location of the collection points for each young person will be individually assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If a young person is accessing a collection point a parent/carer will be responsible for ensuring that the young person gets safely to and from the collection point at the appropriate time. The parent/carer will also be responsible for them when they are waiting for transport, and when they leave the transport at the end of the day.

4.11 No-one at home/collection point

If you are not at home or at the collection point to meet your young person, the driver will wait three minutes after the scheduled set-down time and then continue the journey to drop off other passengers. The transport provider will then attempt to drop your young person off for a 2nd time after completing the remainder of the route. If there is still no-one available to receive the young person, then they will be taken to a place of safety, and you will be expected to collect them as soon as possible.

You will be responsible for the cost of any extra travel involved and supervision provided. If such incidents occur frequently Wokingham Borough Council may suspend provision of Travel Assistance and you will be responsible for travel arrangements to ensure that your young person attends school or college.

4.12 Emergency Contact details

Before transport can be provided, parents/carers need to provide email addresses and contact telephone numbers, including an alternative number in the event of the operator or Council being unable to contact the parent/carer. In the event of late running, or an emergency involving your child, the CTU or the operator will contact the latest number available on our records. It is therefore very important that you notify the CTU if you change your mobile contact number.

4.13 Withdrawal of Travel Assistance for non-attendance

Travel Assistance is awarded to support a young person to attend a place of education. If a young person persistently fails to attend, other than for ill health, or extenuating circumstances, the Authority reserves the right to withdraw the travel assistance provided. You may need to reapply for travel assistance if the young person later decides to attend again.

4.14 Withdrawal of Travel Assistance on Health and Safety Grounds

The Council has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all children and young people for whom Travel Assistance is provided. We also have an obligation to ensure the health and safety of drivers and passenger assistants.

Children and young people with special educational needs are still expected to behave in a safe and appropriate manner whilst on transport. The Council will work with schools, colleges, parents and the young person to help manage behaviours to ensure the ongoing safety and comfort of all passengers including drivers and any passenger assistants.

In particular we expect all young people to:

- Be ready for their transport in good time;
- Behave in a safe and responsible way whilst travelling;
- Follow all instructions from the driver (or Passenger Assistant where one is provided) especially in an emergency;
- Wear seatbelts or appropriate safety harnesses at all times whilst on the vehicle.

Bullying, including the use of hate speech, will not be tolerated and will be reported to parents and school/college. We will not tolerate abuse of any sort, whether from a young person or from their parents and carers.

If a young person behaves in a manner that places the health and safety of those on board a vehicle at serious risk, or presents an adverse risk to themselves, this may result in Travel Assistance being suspended or withdrawn with immediate effect.

The parent will be informed of any incident that has occurred involving their young person. The Council will work to find an alternative way for the young person to get to school/college safely but, during this process, the parent of the young person will be responsible for making suitable arrangements to get the young person to school/college.

Section 5: Applications, Complaints and Appeals

5.1 How to Apply for Travel Assistance

Complete an Application Form

If a young person believes they may be entitled to travel support they should obtain and complete a Home to School/College Travel Assistance Form from the link below. It is the same application form for both Sixth form and Post 19 applications. Please ensure that the age of the young person and their year group in September of the coming academic year are clear in the application.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/schools-and-education/school-information-and-services/school-and-college-transport/>

You can submit your completed application form either by email or post using the following addresses: **Please send completed applications to: Community Transport Unit, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN** or by email to: Schooltransport@wokingham.gov.uk

You can also find more information about the Councils SEND Local Offer at the following address:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-offer-for-0-25-year-olds-with-additional-needs/>

If you are unable to access the web page please contact the Community Transport Team on [0118 974 6000](tel:01189746000) to discuss the options.

5.2 Notification of decision

The Community Transport Unit will assess your application for Travel Assistance. The team aims to let you know the outcome of their assessment within 10 working days of the date they receive your application. Where additional information is required from other professional or the Local Authority has yet to confirm a placement decision, then the assessment process may take longer. You will be kept informed of any delays.

5.3 Appeals and Complaints

What is the difference between an appeal and a complaint?

Complaints arise when you are unhappy about something, for example, you may feel you have not been dealt with properly or in a professional manner, that information given to you was incorrect or that there has been an unacceptable delay. For these sorts of issues, please follow the Complaints Procedure (link provided in section below).

With an appeal, you may be perfectly happy with the way that you have been treated but feel that the wrong decision has been made and would like it re-examined. For these issues, please follow the Appeals Procedure.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Council is committed to ensuring that travel assistance provided is appropriate to the needs of the young person, is of a high quality and meets required safety standards.

Complaints about the provision of travel assistance will be investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy. This does not apply to complaints about a refusal to grant transport, which will be dealt with through the Transport Appeals procedure.

The complaints policy can be found at:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-compliments/>.

Appeal Procedures

Parents/guardians/carers or a young person are entitled to challenge the decision of the Council to refuse to provide assistance with transport as set out in this policy or when the parents/guardians/carers or young person consider that the travel assistance, offered by the Council, is unsuitable.

A decision may be challenged on the following grounds:

- eligibility
- distance measurement; and/or
- safety of the route
- suitability of transport arrangements offered

Stage 1 – Review of decision

You have 20 working days from the receipt of the transport decision to make a request for a review of the original decision.

The request should detail why the decision should be reviewed and give personal and/or family circumstances, which you believe should be considered during the appeal process.

How to make a Stage 1 Review of decision

You should make your appeal in writing, either by letter or email.

Please provide us with the following information:

- Confirmation of identity and the capacity in which you are making the appeal (e.g. as legal parent or guardian, or young person)
- the date you received our transport notification
- Child's first name and family name
- Child's date of birth
- Your full name and address
- Your email address
- Your phone/mobile number
- Reasons for the appeal (i.e. eligibility, distance, route safety or transport assistance) and your reasons for challenging the Council's decision
- Any additional evidence you wish to present to support your request for travel assistance.

And then email your request to:

Community Transport Unit, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN or email to schooltransportappeals@wokingham.gov.uk

A Senior Officer from the Council will review the original decision and will send you a letter, detailing the outcome of the review within 20 working days of the receipt of the written request.

This will set out the following information:

- the nature of the decision reached
- how the review was concluded
- information about other departments and/or agencies consulted as part of the process
- what factors were considered
- the rationale for the decision reached
- Information about escalation to Stage 2, if appropriate.

Stage 2 Appeal

If you are unhappy with the decision made at Stage 1, you will have 20 working days from the receipt of the Council's decision to make a request to escalate the matter to Stage 2 appeal.

How to make a Stage 2 Appeal

Please send your written request to:

Community Transport Unit, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN or email to schooltransportappeals@wokingham.gov.uk

You will be expected to consider and offer evidence about:

- Details of how the young person currently travels around outside of college/sixth form
- Examples of incidents/concerns as a result of the Council's original decision
- Current Medical evidence from a consultant supporting the young person
- What efforts have been made by family and friends to support the young person with his/her travel assistance and attendance at college/sixth form
- Evidence that the alternative travel options have been explored, along with evidence why they are not suitable

Your stage 2 appeal will be heard by an independent appeal panel which will be convened to consider the appeal within 40 working days.

No member of the appeal panel will have been involved in the original decision to decline travel assistance. You may request to attend the hearing to present your case in person if you wish. The panel will consider representations from parent/guardian/young person, involved in the request.

The Senior Officer involved in the review of the decision at Stage 1 may also be invited to attend.

You will receive a letter, detailing the outcome of the appeal hearing, which will set out the following information:

- the nature of the decision reached
- how the review was concluded
- information about other departments and/or agencies consulted as part of the process
- what factors were considered

- the rationale for the decision reached
- information about escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) if appropriate

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

You have a right of complaint to the LGO if you feel that there was a failure on the part of the Authority to comply with procedural rules or there was an irregularity in the way the appeal was handled.

The LGO can be contacted at:

Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Helpline: 0300 061 0614.

www.lgo.org.uk

APPENDIX A

Eligible Learning and Training Providers

Your study programme or training must take place through a publicly-funded provider. This includes:

- A publicly-funded school or academy (including a free school or University Technical College (UTC));
- A publicly-funded further education institution, including further education college and sixth form college;
- A local authority maintained or assisted institution providing further or higher education;
- An independent specialist provider for learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities
- A learning provider that is funded by a local authority to deliver accredited programmes of learning which lead to positive outcomes (this could include colleges, charities and private learning providers)

What is NOT eligible:

- Training provided by a commercial trainer i.e. training for which the student or their employer pays directly
- Placements at independent or private fee-paying schools and colleges (unless adopted in the EHCP)
- Placements at any provider who does not provide accredited programmes of learning.

You can find more details at the Wokingham Local Offer

Go to <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-offer-for-0-25-year-olds-with-additional-needs/>

APPENDIX B

Useful Contacts

Community Transport Unit, Wokingham Borough Council, Shute End, Wokingham, RG40 1BN or by email to Schooltransport@wokingham.gov.uk

Office hours are 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, including school holidays.

Outside these hours please contact the service provider direct.

Please contact your Post-16 establishment directly for more information on 16-19 Bursary and Discretionary Learner Support.