

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Adult Social Care Travel Assistance Policy
July 2017

1. Introduction

ASC provides travel assistance for adults with learning disabilities, mental health issues, physical disabilities and older people within the Borough of Southend-on-Sea. This travel assistance policy demonstrates how the Council will support individuals by providing travel assistance to access social care activities in a consistent and equitable way.

Over recent years, the introduction of new national legislation has resulted in significant changes to the way in which social care opportunities are provided. Today, individuals have greater choice in deciding the format, location and timing of their social care activities. This increased freedom has implications for travel and this policy aims to outline how travel demand might best be met - whether through independent travel arrangements, self-funded travel or via Council-funded and arranged travel solutions.

It is assumed and expected that people who can travel to an eligible social care activity, either independently or with assistance from family, friends or care givers will do so.

Funded travel will only be provided if, in the opinion of the assessor, there is no alternative and appropriate travel option available and it is the only reasonable means of ensuring that the individual can safely access an eligible activity.

Adult Social Care will work closely with the Children and Young People's Service to ensure that the travel needs of children and young people are assessed whilst at school, so that opportunities to undertake travel training in order to complete specific journeys on mainstream transport have already been explored and, where appropriate, implemented. This will assist in overcoming any expectations from families that Adult Social Care will provide travel assistance to individuals in all circumstances. All young people requiring adult social care will require an assessment of their travel needs.

2. Links to National and Local Priorities and Plans

The Care Act 2014 has replaced various pieces of legislation and policies. The changes introduced in the Care Act are designed to put individuals in control of their lives.

The Care Act states that local authorities must have regard to promoting wellbeing which means considering any care and support needs in the context of the person's skills, ambitions and priorities. The Act requires local authorities to consider an individual's ability to get around in the community safely and consider their ability to use facilities such as public transport, shops or recreational facilities when considering the impact on their wellbeing. This includes consideration of the role a person's family or friends can play in helping the person to meet their goals.

The Care Act promotes an approach of preventing, reducing and delaying needs for care and support and refers to the consideration of a person's strengths , their informal support networks any other support that might be available in the community to meet their goals. This approach recognises the value in the resources of voluntary and community groups and the other resources of the local area.

This travel assistance policy addresses 2 of the Council's 5 Aims and 4 of its 15 Corporate Priorities as follows:

Aim : Healthy

Priority: To actively promote healthy and active lifestyles for all

Priority: To improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities

Aim: Excellent

Priority: To work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all

Priority: To enable communities to be self-sufficient and foster pride in the town

3. Policy Aims and Principles

This policy aims to:

- Promote independence
- Maximise choice and control
- Support a healthy lifestyle
- Improve quality of life
- Maintain dignity
- Provide access to local services

The key principle is that those who can travel to a community activity, whether independently or with the assistance of family, friends or care givers, will do so. Adult Social Care will provide a signposting service to ensure that individuals have access to tailored travel information to enable them to plan their journeys.

The use of commonly available transport options will be encouraged, such as public transport, walking or mobilising with the use of aids either independently or with support, people using their own car or Motability vehicle, utilising transport assistance costs and concessionary travel.

Travel assistance will be provided to the nearest available resource / community activity. Should an individual wish to access an activity which is further afield when there is a comparable activity which is closer to home, the individual will be required to finance any additional travel assistance costs.

Following an assessment of need, Council-funded transport will only be provided to meet an eligible assessed need. The transport provided will be appropriate to meet the need, provide value for money and be cost-effective.

4. Guidance for determining eligibility for travel assistance

The Council will adopt the decision making process outlined in Annex 1 in determining the individual's eligibility for travel assistance.

Council-funded travel assistance will not normally be provided to individuals if they:

- a. live in a residential care home
- b. attend a social care facility which has its own transport
- c. have their own Motability vehicle which they drive themselves
- d. have a Motability vehicle for which they are not usually the driver
- e. have family, friends or care givers who are able to transport them
- f. have a bus pass which they are able to use to attend the community activity

If the person has access to any of the travel arrangements listed in a. to f. above and chooses not to use them, the expectation is that they will fund their own travel.

In determining an individual's suitability for travel assistance, the Council will adopt the principle of reasonableness, e.g. is it reasonable to expect the individual to make their own travel arrangements; travel a certain distance, rely on a carer to drive the Motability car; etc.

4.1 Assessment of ability to travel independently

Where it has been determined that there is no existing transport provision available, or its use may introduce unreasonable levels of risk to an individual when travelling independently, an assessment will be undertaken.

The Children and Young Peoples Service actively promotes independence in the provision of travel assistance and assesses children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for suitability to undergo Independent Travel Training (ITT). Adult Social Care will ascertain whether an individual has previously completed an ITT course and whether they were subsequently able to travel independently for their school or college journey.

Those individuals who were previously deemed to be capable of independent travel will undergo refresher training for the purposes of making journeys independently to and from community activities. The principle of reasonableness will be applied to ensure that the proposed journey is achievable via the intended mode(s) of travel.

Those individuals who have not previously undertaken a course of ITT will be assessed for their suitability to do so. The assessment will include consideration of the individual's:

- Mental capacity
- Communication difficulties
- Psychological factors e.g. mental health, dementia, agoraphobia
- Vulnerability
- Consideration of degenerative conditions
- Any other factors that may affect personal safety

As well as issues regarding mobility, such as

- Ability to walk outside

- Requirement for a wheelchair or other walking aid
- Ability to enter and leave a property
- Ability to get on and off a vehicle
- History of falls
- Ability to use stairs

The assessor will use the information gathered to determine whether the individual:

- a. Is capable of travelling independently using the proposed travel mode without an unreasonable level of risk
- b. Requires travel training to enable them to be capable of independent travel in the near future
- c. Is not capable of travelling independently via the proposed mode of travel and will require Council-funded transport that meets their assessed needs

4.2 Identification of Appropriate Transport

Once eligibility has been confirmed, it is the duty of Adult Social Care to facilitate appropriate travel arrangements. Travel which is arranged or provided by the Council will only be provided once other alternatives have been considered and discounted. The range of travel assistance may include:

- Assistance with using public transport e.g. travel buddies
- Shared travel in Council-funded minibuses
- Shared travel in taxis
- Solo travel in taxis

ASC resources are unlikely to be allocated specifically to meet transport related needs where an individual:

- is in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, unless there are factors limiting their ability to fully utilise the benefits of the allowance, e.g. geographical location, the nature of the disability or carer support requirements
- lives in a residential care home, as these are subject to the terms and conditions of the contract between the Council and the care home

5. Charging

A charge is imposed for all travel which is arranged or provided by the Council as a contribution toward the cost of providing the transport. Differential charges will be applied for individuals who:

- make one return journey per day to a local activity (£4)
- make a return journey to a main day centre plus additional journeys to access activities at other locations during the course of a day (£5)

Alternatively, individuals can take funding for travel in the form of a direct payment. In such cases, the charge for transport is a daily charge, regardless of the distance travelled.

Charges are reviewed on an annual basis.

6. Implementation

This policy will be applied from 1 April 2018 to any new applicants for adult social care travel assistance.

The travel needs of individuals already in receipt of travel assistance will be assessed, with regard to the new policy, at their annual review.

7. Monitoring, Review and Reassessment

In all cases, the travel arrangements organised on behalf of an individual will be temporary and subject to review within a period of weeks of commencement. This will ensure that the arrangement is the most suitable for the individual and is value for money and cost-effective for the Council.

Travel arrangements and any impacts this policy has had on the ability of vulnerable people to access appropriate services to meet their eligible social care needs, will be considered by assessing officers at a review or reassessment of the individual's needs.

An individual or their authorised representative may request a review of their social care assessment if at any time they consider their needs have substantially changed.

At any time in this process the individual or their representative may make a complaint under the Council's Complaints Procedure.

8. Appeals

There may be instances where some applications are declined and the individual or their carer may not agree with the Council's decision. In these cases, the Council offers an Appeals Process. The number to call to appeal a decision is 01702 215008, option 6.

Annex 1 Decision Process in Determining ASC Travel Assistance

