

Proposed Changes to Special Educational Needs Travel Assistance Policy – Consultation - July 2017

Background (what we do now):

Currently, pupils aged 5 to 16 with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SSEN) or Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are entitled to travel assistance, are usually transported to and from school by a minibus or taxi provided by the Council.

Post-16 students with an SSEN or EHCP who are eligible for travel assistance are also provided with transport to and from school or college by minibus or taxi, provided by the Council.

Proposed Changes:

The proposed changes to current provision offers different types of travel assistance (outlined below) aimed at encouraging independence and well-being.

In order of priority, the types of travel assistance considered will be:

1. Independent travel training (for children aged 14 to 19)
2. Travel support allowance
3. Minibus or taxi provision

Independent Travel Training:

When the Council receives an application for travel assistance for a young person aged 14 -19, the Council, in conjunction with the young person's parents/carers and school/college, will decide whether independent travel training is best option for them.

Independent travel training is one-to-one training that gives young people the confidence and skills they need to travel to and from school on their own.

The training is tailored to the individual and there is no fixed timescale for completing the training. Whilst travel training is being undertaken the young person will be given another type of travel assistance until they can make the school journey on their own - on foot, by bicycle or public transport.

Young persons aged between 14-16 who have successfully completed the travel training will be given appropriate support for the school travel (e.g. a cycle allowance or public transport assistance). Please see page 3 for travel assistance for post 16 students.

Travel Support Allowance:

If travel training is not considered suitable by the Council, parents/carers and the school/college, or the young person is not able to make the journey on their own at the end of the training, they may be offered a travel support allowance.

This would be a direct payment for the young person and their family to make their own school travel arrangements.

This could include a parent or carer taking the young person in their own car, paying a friend or relative to take the young person to school, paying for another child's travel to school to enable the parent to take the SEND child to school, etc.

Please note that for children travelling to schools outside of Southend borough, a travel support allowance will be the first type of travel assistance offered.

Minibus or taxi provision:

A seat on a minibus will **only** be offered if independent travel training or a travel support allowance are not deemed suitable by the Council taking into account the young person's needs.

A solo taxi will only be offered as a last resort if no other transport option is considered suitable and the young person's parent or carer will be expected to act as the passenger assistant wherever possible.

CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 14 WITH SEND:

Children aged 5-14 who are eligible for travel assistance will be offered a travel support allowance in the first instance. Where this option has been considered but not deemed suitable then a seat on a minibus will be offered.

A solo taxi will only be offered by the Council as a last resort if no other transport option is considered suitable and the young person's parent or carer will be expected to act as the passenger assistant wherever possible.

Post 16 Students with SEND:

Post 16 SEND students will be expected to pay towards the cost of their travel assistance if they do not meet the low income household criteria.

The payment will be the same amount as for mainstream Post 16 students, i.e. the current contribution for 2017/18 school year is £560. Students who live in eligible low income households, subject to an assessment of the household income will determine if free travel assistance is to be provided by the Council.