

Home to educational establishment travel assistance

Post 16 travel assistance – hardship assessment criteria and process

1 The Council's statutory duty

The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide home to educational establishment travel assistance to post 16 students with the exception of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires councils to adopt criteria for assessing families that are on low income or 'disadvantaged'.

2 Criteria for assessing hardship/low income

The Council has adopted criteria for determining hardship/low-income cases for those young people aged 16 – 19 who are continuing in education and where there are no suitable arrangements offered by the college/sixth forms, most of which are either free of charge or heavily subsidised.

A welfare check will be offered to all applicants who are suffering hardship due to low income. This will help to identify any unmet needs, and to provide early support and financial assistance. A full assessment will be completed to include details of income and expenditure. This will help to identify whether the applicant has sufficient means to pay associated travel costs. All income will be taken into account, including income which would normally be disregarded for benefit calculation purposes, such as DLA (Disability Living Allowance) or PIP (Personal Independence Payments).

This means that those with the highest needs who consequently have increased expenditure will have this considered fully under this test rather than being capped at the level of their DLA or PIP (if this was to be disregarded without full consideration of need and expenditure).

3 The travel assistance application process

You can apply for travel assistance on the grounds of financial hardship on the [school and college travel assistance page](#) – post 16 hardships application. This will be submitted to the Council's Benefits team. A full assessment will be completed by the team, considering all income

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and expenditure, which will help to identify whether the applicant has sufficient means to pay associated travel costs.

If an applicant wishes to challenge the decision made with regards to hardship/low income they can ask for a review of the decision which will then be considered by an officers' appeal panel. It is the **responsibility of the parent/carer** who is making the appeal (the appellant) to ensure that all evidence is made available to support the case, in order for the appeals panel to make an informed decision. Failure to do so may mean a deferral to the appeal hearing until such evidence is supplied. Supporting evidence should include (where the case is on grounds of financial hardship) a completed statement of incomings.

For further information about the appeals process, see Appendix 1, Eligibility, section 5 - Stage two appeal.