

Guidance notes to support the home to educational establishment transport policy

Travel assistance for children and young people with special educational needs, a disability and/or mobility problems

What you need to know

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Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester Council 'the Council' provides travel assistance for children and young people in certain circumstances. This guidance sets out details of eligibility, the application process, mode of travel offered, useful contacts and if applicable, the contributory charges for children and young people. This document supports the Council's home to educational establishment transport policy.

Eligibility

1. Whose responsibility is it to get my child to their educational establishment?

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child/children get to and from school at the appropriate time each day. Travel arrangements are an important consideration when parent/carers are making preferences. You should think about how practical it is to choose a school which is not within walking distance, unless it is designated as your nearest qualifying school. It is your responsibility as a parent/ carer, to ensure home to school travel arrangements are in place.

Parents/carers are expected to accompany their children to and from school or make other suitable arrangements. A child will not normally be eligible solely because their parent or carer's work commitments or caring responsibilities mean they are unable to accompany their child themselves.

Section 508B of the Education Act 1996, 'the Act', outlines the duties placed on local authorities to make such travel arrangements in order to facilitate attendance at school for 'eligible' children. Schedule 35B of the Act defines eligible children – those categories of children of compulsory school age (aged 5-16) in an authority's area for whom free travel arrangements will be required.

2. Who is 'eligible' to receive free travel assistance?

There are four main criteria for free travel assistance that a local authority has to consider. They are outlined below:

Statutory walking distances eligibility

To provide free travel assistance for pupils of compulsory school age (aged 5-16) if their nearest qualifying school is:

- beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8) or
- beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16).

Special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems eligibility

To make travel assistance arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school or educational establishment because of their mobility difficulties or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability*. Eligibility for such children will be assessed on an individual basis in order to identify their particular travel assistance requirements.

*As per schedule 35 of the Act, in section 6 of Education Act 2010 as follows: a person has a disability if they have (a) a physical or mental impairment, and (b) that impairment has a substantial long-term effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Therefore, a chronic health condition (medical needs) may lead to eligibility under this definition.

Unsafe route eligibility

To make travel arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school or educational establishment because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

Extended right eligibility

To provide free travel assistance where pupils receive free school meals if:

- the nearest qualifying school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11 (primary school age));
- the school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11 to 16 and there are not 3 or more suitable nearer secondary schools);
- the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11 to 16).

Please note: Maximum Working Tax Credits have been replaced by Universal Credit 5 April 2025. Free School Meals remain the only qualifying criteria for 'extended eligibility

Please note: the transitional protection for Free School Meals ends on 31 March 2025.

From 1 April 2025, any existing claimants who do not meet the eligibility criteria at that point will continue to receive Free School Meals until the end of the child's current phase of education e.g. the end of primary or secondary school. As a result, this will first affect pupils currently in year 6 or year 11 first.

Any new applications made on or after 1 April 2025 will not receive this transitional protection.

Cheshire West and Chester's discretionary free travel assistance for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities

0-4 year olds

Free discretionary travel assistance will be provided in accordance with the eligibility criteria listed within the 'statutory free travel assistance' section above for 0-4 year olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are attending a nursery, special school or provision placed by the Council.

16 to 19 year olds

The 16 to 19 travel assistance duty relates to young people of 'sixth form' age with special educational needs and/or disabilities aged up to 19.

The Council will provide discretionary free travel assistance for 16 to 19 year olds with an EHCP who are attending their nearest qualifying educational establishment where there are no other suitable transport arrangements in place and who fulfil one of the following criteria:

- the educational establishment is beyond the statutory walking distance of 3 miles, OR
- the educational establishment is within the statutory walking distance but the young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk there accompanied because of their special educational needs and/or disability or mobility difficulties, OR
- the educational establishment is within the statutory walking distance, but having regard to the nature of the route the young person cannot be expected to walk to it, accompanied as necessary, OR
- the young person is unable to access the existing transport arrangements because of their special educational needs and/or disability or mobility difficulties.

Families may wish to apply for a 16 to 19 bursary fund. The 16 to 19 bursary fund is a central government scheme set up to help 16 to 19 year olds continue in education, where they might otherwise struggle for financial reasons. It is made up of two parts: bursaries of up to £1,200 a year to the most vulnerable young people; and a discretionary fund for schools, colleges, academies, training providers (providers) to distribute to other students who face genuine barriers to participation, which could include transport costs.

The 16 to 19 bursary fund guide for providers, which sets out arrangements for the scheme, is available to download from the government's education website:
<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

19 to 25 year olds

The Council will provide free travel assistance to 19 to 25 year olds with a named nearest suitable educational establishment in the EHCP which is either maintained or assisted by the Council and where there is no other suitable transport arrangement already in place.

To find out which is your designated nearest educational establishment, contact the SEN team senteamwest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or telephone 0151 3376505

3. Who is eligible for travel assistance with a charge applied?

The Council may offer travel assistance at a cost to the parent/carers where the child has been assessed as ineligible. See section 6 of the home to school travel assistance policy for further details.

4. What is defined as a 'nearest qualifying school'?

A 'nearest qualifying school' is taken to mean a school or registered educational establishment with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any SEN that the child may have.

The Council only provides travel assistance to pupils attending their nearest qualifying school/educational establishment, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria mentioned above. Please note that the nearest qualifying school/educational establishment with places available may not necessarily be the catchment school for your home address.

For pupils with an EHCP the nearest qualifying school is taken to mean the school/educational establishment deemed appropriate by the Council to meet the pupil's needs and which also offers the most efficient use of resources. This is the school named in Section I of the EHCP.

5. What is a suitable school?

A suitable school for school travel purposes is a qualifying school that is suitable for the child's age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. 'Suitable school' does not mean the most suitable school for a child. Schools are able to meet a wide range of needs. The nearest secondary school to the home of a child of secondary school age, for example, will almost always be their nearest suitable school (provided it would be able to admit them).

Where a child has an EHC plan, the school named in the plan will normally be considered to be their nearest suitable school.

6. What is compulsory school age?

Compulsory school age begins at the start of the term following a child's 5th birthday. Young people can leave school on the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they are 16.

The raising of participation age (RPA) legislation requires all young people to stay in a designated learning environment or traineeship until the age of 18. Please refer to the Council's Post 16 transport policy statement for further details. The raising of participation age does not alter the considered compulsory school age for travel assistance eligibility purposes, which remains at 16.

7. What else do you consider when looking at eligibility?

At the point when transport eligibility is considered, the prospect of being able to secure a place in an alternative (usually nearer) school or educational establishment must be a real one.

For children without an EHCP, this will be during the normal school admissions round when places are being finally allocated by the admissions team. The transport team will liaise with the admissions team at this point in order to determine availability of places and the prospect of being offered a place.

For children with an EHCP, the SEN Team will consult with schools to identify the nearest school to the home address that has a place available and is able to meet the needs of the child.

For further information, see section 11 onwards.

8. What if my child lives at two addresses?

In the event that a family has separated, travel assistance will only be provided from one address. The assessment will be carried out from the address which was identified on the school preferences. In the event of a Court Order, a copy of the Court Order will be required for our legal team to review. However, the Court Order usually dictates the care arrangements for the child/ren and does not compel a council to provide travel assistance from both addresses. In the event that parents cannot provide one nominated address, the address which is registered to receive the Child Benefit will be nominated by the Council.

Route assessment

9. How do you measure the route to the nearest qualifying school or educational establishment?

The measurement of the statutory walking distance to the nearest qualifying school is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest available route, that is not classed as hazardous for a child to walk, accompanied as necessary by an appropriate adult. As such, the route measured will include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, in addition to recognised roads. Please note: private driveways/private roads are excluded from the measurement. And hazardous routes are only considered when a child is attending the nearest qualifying school.

The Transport Commissioning Service uses a bespoke in-house digital GIS mapping system which identifies the shortest available route. The systems measurements can include a combination of footpaths, bridleways, other pathways, in addition to recognised roads. Measurements along roads will also be considered, even if there is no continuous footpath, as long as the route has not been classed as hazardous. Private driveways/private roads are excluded from the measurement. Measurements start from the pupil's home gate or end of drive nearest to the school to the nearest gate/entrance of the school grounds. Some internet packages might show a different

measurement as they may only use the road network to measure distances. The system takes into account routes that have been classified as recognised hazardous routes and would therefore not expect any accompanied child/young person to walk along a route which has been deemed unsuitable on safety grounds. Where it is considered that the route may be 'hazardous', an assessment of the route will be made. An assessment will also be made for an eligible pupil in response to parental concerns about the safety of a walking route to a bus-stop. Further information about the calculation of distances and hazardous routes are to be found in Appendix four - Guidance on Walking to School routes. In instances where the suitability and safety of a walking route is in question, the final decision will rest with the council.

Children may sometimes live a very similar distance from more than one school. Where the schools are within the statutory walking distance, the Council will determine which is the nearest by measuring the shortest walking route. Where the schools are beyond the walking distance, the Council will continue to measure the shortest available route, and these routes may use a combination of road networks, cycleways and footpaths - whichever would result in providing the shortest route available. The method for measuring these distances will vary depending on the various routes available. The measurement does not include private driveways/private roads.

The 2-mile limit for extended rights eligibility is measured in the same way described above as the statutory walking distances. However, routes that measure beyond the 6-mile upper limit and the 15-mile upper limit to a qualifying school preferred on grounds of religion or belief are measured along routes that are passable using a suitable motorised vehicle. In short, the upper limits are measured along driving routes. **What about straight line distance (as the crow flies)?**

Distance measurements for travel assistance purposes are calculated on the shortest available walking route up to 3 miles or driving route for distances over 3 miles and the upper limits. For school admissions purposes, the Council uses straight line measurements to determine the nearest school with a place available. Therefore, the nearest school for admissions purposes and for travel assistance can be different.

To find out which is your designated nearest qualifying school or educational establishment, contact the SEN team senteamwest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or telephone 0151 3376505.

Exceptional circumstances

10. Is travel assistance offered to children in temporary residential circumstances?

Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For families in temporary accommodation as a result of becoming homeless, travel assistance may be provided

for up to 56 days so that the children can continue to attend school. Thereafter, it is expected that a more permanent housing solution will have been found. In cases where this is proving challenging and the family has been relocated to dispersed temporary accommodation by the council, travel assistance may continue to be provided for up to 6 months. Families are expected to find a more permanent residence during this time and travel assistance will cease 6 months from the date they moved into the dispersed accommodation.

Once permanent accommodation has been found, the usual transport policy will apply. Parents/carers may want to consider school placements and how a child will travel to and from school following their move into permanent accommodation.

11. Is travel assistance offered to children in the care of the local authority (children in care)?

The allocation of a school or educational establishment will be reviewed as part of the child/young person's regular care plan review, especially where a child has moved from one placement to another. Where a child has an EHCP, discussions between the social worker and the SEN Team will be required in order to determine the suitability of the school, including the travel time to and from new residential placement. The Council has a duty to consider travel time to and from a school when looking to secure or maintain an educational placement and where this is felt to be excessive, it may be that a suitable school closer to the child's residential placement may be more appropriate. In the event that all professionals involved feel that maintaining the current educational placement would be in the child's best interests, travel arrangements will be made for the child to continue to attend the school.

12. What if I live under the statutory walking distance but have exceptional circumstances?

Travel assistance may be provided if you are able to demonstrate sufficient evidence of exceptional circumstances. Typically, parents/carers will need to submit an eligibility appeal for their case to be reviewed by an officer at a stage 1 appeal. The officer will consider the information provided to determine whether the circumstances experienced by the family are exceptional, i.e. would not typically impact other families.

When determining whether to offer travel support, consideration will not be given to:

- Parents/carers work or other commitments, such as having children at different schools
- Personal circumstances when considering drop off/collection points and times
- If a parent chooses to send their child to a school that is not the nearest suitable qualifying school to the home address
- A journey from one educational establishment to another, including for off-site training
- Induction days, transition timetables, taster days, open days or interviews

- Work experience
- School trips (for journeys of this nature the organising school or institution will be responsible for travel arrangements)
- Dental, medical or hospital appointments, or other non-educational appointments
- Children taken ill during the day
- Children who are excluded during the day
- Examination timetables – travel will not be tailored to examination timetables; it will only be provided at the standard school start and finish times
- Out of hours clubs (breakfast club, after school activities); for journeys of this nature parents/carers will be responsible for travel arrangements
- Where the child is attending respite care, or similar, care - requests for support to and from respite should be directed to Social Care within the Council's Children and Family Service. In these instances, a travel solution will be the sole responsibility of the child or young person's parent/carer.

Application and appeal process

13. How do I apply for travel assistance?

Travel assistance for pupils of compulsory school age and 0-4 years:

The SEN team will have consulted with different schools to secure an appropriate placement for your child and this will be named in Section I of their EHCP. They will also carry out an eligibility assessment for travel assistance and will inform you whether your child is eligible for travel assistance. If you are deemed ineligible and believe that after reading the eligibility policy exceptional circumstances apply, you can appeal the decision by submitting an [eligibility appeal](#).

For children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and do not have an EHCP, parents/carers will need to apply for travel assistance on the [Council's webpage](#).

Travel assistance for pupils over the age of 16

Parents/carer's or the young person themselves will need to apply for travel assistance. Each young person will have an annual re-assessment to determine whether continued support is required. Where appropriate, the young person may be directed to the Independent Travel Training programme to support the development of independence skills.

There is an exception to this. For those young people remaining at a special school for sixth form, where they have previously received free travel assistance, they will continue to receive the travel support until the young person leaves the school.

Travel assistance for pupils with medical needs aged 5-16:

A medical needs travel assistance application form must be completed. The form is available on the [school and college transport webpage](#). It is the responsibility of the

parent/carer to produce evidence of the medical condition in all cases. This is normally endorsed by the family doctor or consultant. Any charges from medical professionals with regards supplying the necessary information will not be reimbursed by the Council.

Annual application is required, with updated medical evidence.

Any travel assistance provided will automatically cease at the end of the academic year where an application has not been received.

14. If my application does not meet the eligibility criteria, can I pay for a seat on the school bus?

You can register an interest for purchasing a spare seat from us here:

[Spare seats scheme | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

Spare seats are a space on a school vehicle (operated by or on behalf of us) that has not been allocated to an eligible pupil. A spare seat will only be offered where there are no public services on which your child could pay a daily fare.

Please note the offer of a spare seat is for one academic year only, or until an eligible child requires that seat, and you will need to apply on an annual basis.

There is a fixed charge for a spare seat which is £880 for the academic year. Where individual cases can demonstrate hardship, the charge will be £440 for the academic year. This can be paid in three termly or six half-termly instalments.

For compulsory school aged children hardship will be determined using the extended rights criteria as mentioned above in section two.

For pupils of post 16 age hardship will be determined using the discretionary hardship assessment completed by the Council's benefits team.

Please contact the educational establishment (school/college, etc.,) if the bus service is provided directly by them.

15. Can I appeal against the eligibility decision if my application for travel assistance is refused?

Yes. If you feel the policy has not been applied correctly or you have exceptional circumstances you wish to be considered you can ask for your case to be reviewed. For further details regarding the eligibility review process please visit the [school and college transport webpage](#) and see question 8 in this guidance to understand what does and does not fall under exceptional circumstances.

Hardship/low income

16. What if I am on low income?

For compulsory school age children (aged 5-16):

If your child is of compulsory school age and is in receipt of free school meals travel assistance will be provided if the child meets the eligibility criteria as noted in section 'who is eligible for free travel assistance.'

If your child has been deemed eligible for assistance on medical needs grounds, but is not attending their nearest qualifying school, is of compulsory school age and is in receipt of free school meals a contributory hardship charge will be applied for the travel assistance offered.

Maximum Working Tax Credits have been replaced by Universal Credit 5 April 2025. Free School Meals remain the only qualifying criteria for 'extended eligibility.'

For non-compulsory school age children (aged 0-4 years and 16-19 years)

The criterion for determining low-income for non-compulsory school age pupils is not prescribed, but the Council has developed a discretionary hardship assessment process in which it will take into account the whole household income and expenditure. Applicants wishing to be considered for discretionary hardship will be expected to complete and submit a hardship application form to the council's benefits team in order for their financial circumstances to be assessed. Where low income/hardship is determined a contributory hardship charge will be applied for the travel assistance offered.

Types of assistance offered**17. If I meet the necessary eligibility criteria, what form of travel assistance is my child likely to be offered?**

All arrangements for travel assistance which may be made under the Home to Educational Establishment Transport policy will be at the Council's discretion, taking account of the child/young person's needs and best value principles. These arrangements will take the form of:

- travel pass for use on public bus and rail transport
- independent travel training (ITT)
- cycle allowance
- travel pass for use on school and college contract services (bus)
- alternative/accessible vehicle (minibus/taxi)

- personal travel budget (PTB)

18. What if I disagree with the mode of assistance offered?

The Council is responsible for making such travel arrangements as it considers necessary in order to facilitate a child's attendance at the relevant educational establishment. If you are dissatisfied with the offer made you can ask for the decision to be reviewed via an online appeal form which will trigger the first of a two-stage suitability appeal process. For further details please see the school and college transport webpage.

19. How does a personal travel budget (PTB) work?

A PTB is available to you if your child is eligible for travel assistance for children and young people with an EHCP.

You can spend the PTB how you like, as long as your child travels in a way that ensures their safety, encourages their attendance and enables them to arrive at their educational establishment on time and in a positive manner, ready to learn.

The PTB calculation is based on the distance between home and educational establishment for the days that your child attends. The distance is measured using the shortest route and each journey is calculated from home to school to home.

Payments are made from the council directly into your designated bank account, in advance, on a termly basis. The PTB will be reviewed each year and it is unlikely that it will impact on any other benefits.

To have flexibility and control over your child's travel, contact schoolplanningandpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk to apply for a PTB.

20. Is training available to help my child travel independently?

Yes. We are able to offer one-to-one training to eligible children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan to help them travel independently. Our team of specialist travel trainers develop an individual package of support to help teach skills which include: road safety, planning a journey, accessing buses and trains, learning routes and landmarks and what to do in an emergency.

For further information about this scheme please see the Council's webpages.

21. What are the timescales for responding to applications and making the travel arrangements for eligible children?

The Council aims to respond to applications within 10 working days from the date they are received. Where the application is for the following September and the child has

an EHCP, applications can only be responded to once an educational setting has been named in Section I. This may cause delays to the timescales.

When a child has been assessed as being eligible for travel assistance, the Transport Commissioning Service will undertake an assessment to determine the available options. Where an existing contract (public bus, school bus, minibus or taxi) has available space, they will require at least 5 working days in which to allocate the child to a suitable vehicle. Where a new contract is required, the service require at least 10 working days in which to set this up.

For compulsory aged children starting a new establishment in September, or those remaining at a special school sixth form, the Transport Commissioning Service aim to have information about contracts with parents in the summer term, to allow time to prepare for any changes and arrange meet and greets with the driving staff. For young people attending a college, and where application forms have been received before 30 June. the information will be sent out around mid-August.

Questions once travel assistance is set up

22. How will I know about the travel assistance arrangements?

The Transport Commissioning Service will inform you of the travel assistance offered. Should your child need specialist equipment to travel, a risk assessment will be undertaken. Should the Council need to change your child's travel arrangements at any time, you will be provided with as much notice as possible.

Wheelchair assessments will be carried out on all children who need to travel in their wheelchair to ensure that it can be safely secured in the vehicle and has been appropriately tested.

If your child has any particular health requirements such as carrying or requiring emergency medication whilst travelling, and/or a Health Care Plan, which you feel relevant, please advise the transport team as soon as possible so that we can ensure appropriate travel assistance is put in place.

Ensuring that the appropriate travel assistance is in place will cause delays in these instances and so the timescales above will not be met.

23. Will my child have a passenger assistant?

Passenger assistants are not normally provided on vehicles. Drivers and operators are fully checked to make sure they meet all of our requirements, including having a

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, (formerly Criminal Records Check (CRB)). When considering whether a passenger assistant is necessary, we will take account of:

- the young person's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required
- where an individual young person's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle
- where a passenger assistant is required to help manage the journey and support all passengers on the vehicle
-

Passenger assistants assigned to the vehicle will be provided with information about your child. Prior to the commencement of the travel assistance, an introductory visit should be arranged with the driver and, if necessary, passenger assistant.

Parents/carers will be responsible for arranging the meet and greets and a time mutually convenient to both parties. This is an opportunity to make sure that they are fully aware of your child's SEN/medical condition and any strategies to help make the journey as safe and pleasant as possible. This may include a list of likes and dislikes and the issue of a reading book or music.

24. How long will the journey take?

The Council aims to keep the journey times as short as possible. Sometimes children have a longer journey time to reach a special school. The travel assistance used may not necessarily follow the most direct route because it may pick up other children along the way.

The Department for Education recommends the following travel times:

- 45 minutes for a primary aged child
- 75 minutes for a secondary aged child

Although the Transport Commissioning Service aim to keep to these guidelines, it is acknowledged that it may not always be achievable.

25. Where will my child be picked up from?

You will be notified of an estimated time and pick-up point. This may involve walking to the nearest pick-up point unless a disability or medical condition prevents them walking there. You are responsible for your child's safety between home and the pick-up point and for putting them on the vehicle. You need to make sure your child is ready to be collected five minutes before the pick-up time. If the vehicle has to leave without your child, it is your responsibility to get them to school. Drivers do not sound their horns or leave their vehicles to alert you of their arrival.

26. What if the vehicle doesn't arrive?

If the travel assistance does not arrive, you should telephone the Transport Commissioning Service on 0300 123 7039. They will find out why there is a delay and may arrange for another vehicle to be sent. Any replacement vehicle will be staffed with drivers, and if necessary, passenger assistants with DBS clearance.

27. Where will my child be dropped off on the return journey?

You will be notified of an estimated time and drop-off point. It is your responsibility to be at the drop-off point five minutes before the vehicle is due. Your child will not be left on their own or in the care of anybody else without prior written permission. If you are not at the designated drop-off point the driver will contact the transport commissioning service who will then arrange for a place of safety under the guidance of children's social care.

28. Can my child use the travel assistance to travel to and from short breaks/ respite placements and before and after school clubs?

No. Travel assistance is provided specifically to meet the standard school start and finish times and therefore cannot be used for before and after school clubs. Travel assistance to short breaks/respite placements must be requested through your child's social worker and will be considered by the children and family's service.

29. Can my child eat and drink on the travel assistance vehicle?

No. Eating and drinking is not permitted on vehicles. If your child has a medical condition which means they must eat regularly you must notify the SEN team/medical needs team of this in advance of the journey. It may require a risk assessment.

30. Can my child take equipment on the travel assistance vehicle?

Additional equipment and bags will only be permitted if previously agreed with the transport commissioning service and:

- there is enough room on the vehicle
- they can be stored safely and securely
- it does not incur any additional cost
- it does not inconvenience other passengers.

Other options should be considered, for example is the equipment available at the educational establishment?

Please note: if your child does take additional equipment and bags to their educational establishment the driver and/or passenger assistant will not be expected to carry them.

31. What if my child needs to take medication to their educational establishment?

Medication should be stored in a sealed container and placed inside your child's bag. Should there be a requirement to administer medication during the journey to or from the educational establishment, you must provide written consent and a risk assessment will be undertaken by the Transport Commissioning Service prior to undertaking any administration of the medication. If your child has a Health Care Plan please share any relevant information to assist in completing a risk assessment.

32. What if I need my child to be dropped off at a different address?

Local authorities must make arrangements to enable a child to travel to school for the beginning of the school day, and to return home at the end of the school day. They are not required to make arrangements:

- for children to travel between institutions during the school day;
- to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside school hours; or
- to enable children to get to and from before and after school childcare, whether formal (for example, a childminder) or informal (for example, a grandparent)

Conditions of travel assistance

33. Are there any conditions I have to abide by when accepting travel assistance on behalf of my child?

It is the obligation of parents/carers under education law to secure their children's safe travel to and from their educational establishment. Parents are responsible for their children until they are received onto the educational establishment premises and after they leave.

Travel assistance is only provided on the basis of a formal application submitted by, or on behalf of, the parent/carer or in the cases of children with SEN, where the SEN team have identified children and young people as being eligible. If the application is successful, assistance is effective from the date the child is assessed as eligible. Travel assistance will not normally be provided retrospectively i.e. reimbursement.

Assessments regarding the safety of a particular walking route assume in each case that children are accompanied. Where necessary, therefore, it is the responsibility of the parents/carers to make the arrangements for their child to be accompanied to and

from the educational establishment by another responsible person, if they themselves cannot be available.

34. What happens if my child misbehaves whilst travelling?

Travel assistance is provided to and from the educational establishment for pupils who qualify under the travel assistance policy on the basis that parents/carers, children, schools, Council and transport operators have a shared responsibility for its safe and secure operation in the interests of all the parties.

If your child causes a disruption or jeopardises the safety of passengers or road users, we can change their travel assistance arrangements, suspend them temporarily or ~~exclude~~ offer alternative modes of travel assistance. It will then be your responsibility to get your child to and from their educational establishment. Your child's SEN will be taken into consideration before any action is taken.

If your child causes deliberate damage to a vehicle, you will be expected to pay for the cost of repairs.

Change of details or circumstances

35. What if my child's home address changes?

You are required to inform the SEN team who will then review travel assistance eligibility. If your child remains eligible then alternative travel arrangements will be made and you will be advised of the changes. If your child becomes ineligible for travel assistance following an assessment, you will need to make the arrangements to ensure your child attends school.

Where the child continues to be eligible for free travel assistance, the Transport Commissioning Service will look to allocate the child to an existing contract. They require at least 5 working days in order to do this. However, if an existing contract cannot be found and it either requires a new contract or for the service to commission a larger vehicle, the team will need at least 10 working days' notice.

36. What if I need to cancel my child's travel assistance?

If your child is unable to attend school or the travel assistance is no longer required, you will need to contact the Transport Commissioning Service as soon as possible by emailing SENtransport@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

You will also need to contact the travel assistance provider.

To recommence travel assistance, you will need to contact the Transport Commissioning Service providing at least three working days' notice.

Post 16

37. What happens when my child reaches 16 years old?

Students aged 16 to 19 years:

Travel assistance for students aged 16 to 19 with an EHCP to sixth form, college or other training provider will be considered during the transitional planning process undertaken during years 10 and 11.

The Council would expect to be consulted in the transitional planning process regarding travel provision and parents/carers are strongly advised to contact the Council to confirm that this has taken place.

You will need to complete and submit an application form for travel assistance on an annual basis once your child is over 16 (before the 30 June). The application will be assessed by the SEN team using the eligibility criteria in section two.

Please note: that any applications received after 30 June may not be processed in time for the start of the academic year and therefore parents/carers will need to consider making their own travel arrangements.

Students aged 19 to 25 years:

You will need to complete and submit an application form for travel assistance on an annual basis. The application will be assessed by the SEN team using the eligibility criteria in section two.

If your child is deemed eligible for travel assistance, and there are no other suitable travel assistance arrangements already in place, then the council will provide it free of charge.

38. How do I apply for post 16 travel assistance?

See section twelve

Further information

- SEN team - telephone 0151 337 6505 or email senteamwest@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

- Transport commissioning service - telephone 0300 123 7039 or email SENtransport@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- The Department for Education's website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-education>