

## **Guidance notes to support the Home to School Travel Assistance policy**

### **Mainstream travel assistance for children and young people**

What parents/carers need to know

## Mainstream home to school travel assistance

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## Introduction

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

## Eligibility

### 1. Whose responsibility is it to get my child to school?

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 for school placements. Parents/carers should think about how practical it is to choose a school which is not within walking distance, unless it is designated as the nearest qualifying school. It is the responsibility of the 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 the child themselves.

### 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 to 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 children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school because of their mobility difficulties or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs and/or disability\* (SEND), even if they were accompanied by a responsible adult. See the SEND guidance notes for further information.

\*As per schedule 35 of the Education Act 1996, disability is as defined in section 6 of Education Act 2010 as: a person has a disability if they have (a) a physical or mental impairment, and (b) that

impairment has a substantial long-term effect of 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**

Make travel assistance arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.

### **Extended right eligibility**

Extended rights are designed to support low-income families to exercise school choice. Until the end of the **2025/26 academic year**, a child is eligible for free travel to school if they meet one of the criteria below and they are eligible for free school meals (FSM).

- the child is aged 8-11 and lives more than 2 miles from the nearest primary school
- the child is aged between 11-16 and 'the school' is between 2 and 6 miles from the child's home (provided there are not 3 or more nearer suitable qualifying schools)
- the child is aged between 11-16 and attending their nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion\*\* or belief\*\*, between 2 and 15 miles from home.

From the beginning of the 2026/27 academic year, all children from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to free school meals. There will be two categories of benefits-based free school meals:

- **Targeted FSM** for pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of no more than £7400
- **Expanded FSM** for pupils who do not qualify for Targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit.

From the beginning of the **2026/27 academic year**, a child will be eligible for free travel if they meet one of the following criteria and are eligible for Targeted FSM.

- the child is aged 8-11 and lives more than 2 miles from the nearest primary school
- the child is aged between 11-16 and 'the school' is between 2 and 6 miles from the child's home (provided there are not 3 or more nearer suitable qualifying schools)

- the child is aged between 11-16 and attending their nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion\* or belief\*, between 2 and 15 miles from home.

The Council will use the Department for Education's FSM Eligibility Checking Service to determine whether a child is eligible for Targeted FSM and can therefore be considered for extended rights travel assistance.

\*For schools choices based on belief, evidence from the clergy may be needed if this is not already held on the School Admissions system.

### **3. What is classed as a 'nearest qualifying' school?**

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

Qualifying schools are:

- community, foundation or voluntary schools
- community or foundation special schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral unit
- maintained nursery schools
- city technology colleges (CTC), city colleges for the technology of the arts or academies, including free schools and university technical colleges

Travel assistance is only offered to pupils attending their nearest qualifying school, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria mentioned above.

Please note the nearest qualifying school with places available may not necessarily be the catchment school for the home address or the preferred school.

### **4. 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).

Please note: the example above refers specifically to secondary schools but also applies to other qualifying schools, such as primary and special schools.

Whether a school offers a specific subject, specialism or certain exam board does not impact whether it is considered a more suitable school.

## **5. What do you mean by accompaniment?**

It is an expectation from the Department for Education that parents/carers accompany their children on the route to and from school where this is under the statutory walking distance. All primary-aged children are expected to be accompanied although it is at parental discretion for those children at the end of primary school phase. For children with SEND who are starting in secondary school and where those needs would not prevent them from walking the route to and from school, accompaniment may be appropriate to support them to learn the route to and from school.

A child will not normally be eligible for free travel to school on the grounds of their SEND or mobility problem, or on the grounds that the route is unsafe, if they would be able to walk to school if they were accompanied.

Reasons such as the parent's working pattern or the fact they have children attending more than one school, on their own, will not normally be considered good reasons for a parent being unable to accompany their child. These apply to many parents and, in most circumstances, it is reasonable to expect the parent to make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities (for example, their responsibilities as an employee and as a parent.)

The Council should take into account whether the parent has a disability or mobility problem that would make it difficult for them to accompany their child on the route to and from school and make other suitable arrangements. These applications will be considered in a similar way to those for children with a disability. The Council would not necessarily hold this information and therefore evidence of the disability or mobility difficulty will be required with the application form. Travel assistance may be provided in these instances, if the child is attending the nearest qualifying school, and the information confirms it would be difficult for the parent to accompany their child.

## **6. What is compulsory school age?**

Compulsory school age begins at the start of the term following a child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Since the raising of participation age in 2015, legislation requires all young people to stay in a designated learning environment until the age of 18, (for further details see the post 16 transport policy statement). However, 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 eligibility for travel assistance is considered, the prospect of being able to secure a place in an alternative (usually nearer) school must be a real one.

For most cases this will be during the normal school admissions round when places are being finally allocated by the School Admissions team. The Transport Commissioning Service will liaise with the Admissions team at this point in order to determine availability of places and the prospect of being offered a place.

If a nearer school could have offered the child a place, this becomes the nearest school to the home address, even if parents/carers did not apply for the school place.

## **8. If my child lives between two addresses, will the council consider providing travel assistance from both 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 for the purpose of eligibility for travel assistance?**

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.

Please note: private driveways/private roads are excluded from the measurement.

Additionally, 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 walking route. The system's 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.

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. The system takes into account routes that have been classified as 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.

Please note: some internet packages might show a different measurement as they may only use the road network to measure distances and take into account traffic and roadworks at the time of measurement.

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 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.

Where it is considered that the route may be 'hazardous', an assessment of the route will be made. This would also include concerns about the safety of a walking route to a bus-stop. The exception to this is where an assessment already exists to show that the route is safe to walk. The Council would not reassess the walking route in this instance.

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.

#### **10. My neighbour has been given distance measurements for their nearest qualifying schools: can I assume mine will be the same?**

No. Distance measurements are completed for each application. The Council has developed a mapping tool that will be available for the academic year 26-27 for parents/carers to measure the distances to the nearest school for admissions purposes and then for travel assistance purposes. This can be used as a guide to help parents/carers make informed decisions about school placements.

**11. I've been told the distance measurement for nearest qualifying school is calculated as straight-line distance (as the crow flies) - is this correct?**

For school admissions purposes, the Council uses straight-line measurements to determine the nearest school with a place available. 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. Therefore, the nearest school for admissions purposes and for travel assistance can be different.

The Council has developed a mapping tool that will be available for the academic year 26-27 for parents/carers to measure the distances to the nearest school for admissions purposes and then for travel assistance purposes. This can be used as a guide to help parents/carers make informed decisions about school placements.

**Admissions criteria and travel assistance criteria**

**12. Is catchment still a priority for gaining a school place?**

Yes, for school admissions purposes but not for a child's eligibility for travel assistance. The admissions policy and transport policy are prescribed and administered through different pieces of legislation.

The School Admissions Code 2014 states that an authority must make arrangements for parents and carers to express their preference for any state funded school where they want their child to be educated. The Council should try to comply with this, where possible. As required by the Admissions Code, the authority must set out the criteria against which places will be allocated at the school when there are more applications than places. This includes a list of acceptable oversubscription criteria and 'living in the catchment area' is included in the list.

Section 508B of the Education Act 1996 outlines the duties placed on councils to provide travel assistance to eligible children. The Department for Education's Statutory Guidance for Home to School Travel Assistance 2025 clarifies these duties to make such school travel arrangements as they consider necessary for an 'eligible child' who is attending the nearest qualifying school. The nearest qualifying school **may not** be the catchment school. Cheshire West and Chester Council only provide travel assistance to those pupils attending their nearest qualifying school. This means that travel assistance will not be provided to the catchment school if there is a nearer qualifying school to the home address.

**13. What if my nearest qualifying school, as designated for travel assistance purposes, is historically always over-subscribed?**

Where a child is not attending their nearest qualifying school, the Transport Commissioning Service will liaise with the Admissions Team to see whether the child could have secured a place at an alternative, nearer school(s).

If it is determined a place would have been available at a nearer school, at the point of admission then travel assistance will not be provided. However, if it is found there were no available places at a nearer, over-subscribed qualifying school, travel assistance would be provided to the next nearest school with places.

This assessment process will be applied regardless of whether parents/carers put the nearest school (for travel assistance purposes) as first, second or third preference, or not at all, on the admissions application. We will still consider whether the child could have been offered a place at a nearer school.

The process is to ensure that travel assistance eligibility is considered fairly and consistently for all children.

**14. Travel assistance is a main consideration for me when choosing a school. Will I be disadvantaged in gaining a place at my preferred school if I were to rank it as my second or third preference and put the nearest (for travel assistance purposes), previously oversubscribed, school as my first preference? Would families who had ranked my preferred school as their first preference be given priority over me?**

All preferences are considered on the basis of 'equal preferences'. This means that all preferences will initially be considered without reference to their ranking.

Example one - where a place can be offered to more than one preference (if the schools are undersubscribed or you have a high enough criterion) a single offer will be made for the school you ranked the highest.

Example two - where a place cannot be offered at the school ranked as your first preference (the school is oversubscribed and you do not have a high enough criterion, e.g. 'distance') and you have a higher criterion for a school ranked as your second preference (e.g. 'catchment') your second preference would be given priority over an applicant who has requested that school as their first preference but has a lower criterion. The same applies through to third preference.

Please refer to the oversubscription criteria of each school as there may be differences.

It is strongly advised that the admissions application is made on time by the published closing date for applications, as late applicants will be disadvantaged.

**15. My child attends a feeder primary school to our catchment high school but this is not deemed, for travel assistance purposes, my nearest qualifying school. My child is less likely to get in at my nearest qualifying high school, what should I do?**

When making an application for a school place parents/carers will need to consider both the school admissions and the school transport policies carefully, especially how the child will travel to and from school. When assessing travel assistance eligibility, the Transport Commissioning Service determines whether the child could have secured a place at a nearer school, even if parents/carers did not apply for it. The school admissions booklet provides information about historical intakes.

The Council has developed a mapping tool that will be available for the academic year 26-27 for parents/carers to measure the distances to the nearest school for admissions purposes and then for travel assistance purposes. This can be used as a guide to help parents/carers make informed decisions about school placements.

## **Post 16 mainstream**

### **16. Is travel assistance offered to mainstream post 16 students?**

There is no statutory duty for the Council to provide mainstream post 16 travel assistance.

The Council will, however, continue to exercise its discretionary powers when considering individual cases of low income/hardship. Where low income/hardship can be demonstrated, the Council will consider providing support in order to remove transport as a barrier to an individual's continuing into further education. For further information on post 16 hardship/low-income criteria see Appendix 3 – post 16 transport hardship assessment, and the Post 16 Transport policy statement.

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 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>

## **Exceptional circumstances**

### **17. 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. These time periods are taken from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Once permanent accommodation has been found, the usual travel assistance 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.

### **18. Is travel assistance offered to children in the care of the local authority (children in social 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. 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.

Children who are in long-term foster placements or have been adopted, will be considered under school admissions as being a child in care. This provides the family with the opportunity to secure a placement at a preferred school. However, travel assistance will only be provided to the nearest qualifying school with a place available. An exception may be applied if the school has not been judged to be able to provide high quality support to its vulnerable pupils and this will prevent the child from making progress.

### **19. What if I live under the statutory walking distance but have exceptional circumstances?**

Travel assistance may be provided if parents/carers 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
- Vocational placements at college for students aged 14-16 on roll at a school
- 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 or afterschool clubs, extra-curricular activities or other commitments outside of school hours). 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.

## **Hardship/low-income**

### **20. What if I am on low-income?**

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

As of September 2026, the government are extending the offer of Free School Meals to all children whose family receives Universal Credit. Low-income is defined by a child being in receipt of Free School Meals and family income being a maximum of £7,400 per year. Regardless of the extended offer of Free School Meals, the criteria for low-income remains the same for travel assistance. Children who are currently receiving travel assistance on the grounds of low-income (Extended Rights), will have this entitlement protected until the end of their phase of education (primary or secondary). Thereafter, they will need to apply for travel assistance.

If the 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.

### **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. This includes income that would usually be discounted, like Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP). 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.

### **Application and appeal process**

#### **21. How do I apply for mainstream travel assistance?**

Where a child is transitioning to secondary school in September, an automatic eligibility assessment for travel assistance will be completed after National Offer day. There is no need for parents/carers to apply for travel assistance during this phase.

For children of any other age, parents/carers can apply online via the [school and college transport webpage](#). Parents/carers are advised to apply as soon as the place at the school is confirmed (and before 30 June). The Transport Commissioning Service will undertake the assessment and send an outcome letter to parents/carers to inform them of the outcome.

If the child has an EHCP, please use the special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) transport application form and refer to the guidance notes for pupils with SEND or a mobility difficulty.

If the child has a temporary mobility difficulty that prevents them from walking to school in reasonable safety whilst accompanied, please use the medical needs transport application form.

#### **22. 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. 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 10 working days in which to allocate the child to a suitable vehicle or send out the bus pass.

For compulsory aged children starting a new establishment in September, the Transport Commissioning Service aim to have the passes sent out by mid-August.

Peak workloads are between June and September. This may extend the timescales by which the teams are able to respond to applications.

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

If there are no commercial services operating in the area, parents/carers may be able to purchase a 'spare seat' on a school bus operated by the Council. There is a fixed charge for a spare seat which is £880 for the academic year. This can be paid in three termly or six half-termly instalments. When available, spare seats are offered in date order using the following criteria:

- pupils living in Cheshire West and Chester who have paid for a spare seat in the previous year and have applied to us before 30 June
- new applicants (and previous pupils who miss the above deadline) living in Cheshire West and Chester in order of date application received
- any pupils living outside of Cheshire West and Chester.

Spare seats are offered from the closest available point to a pupil's home address, and usually towards the end of September, once all eligible children have been allocated a seat.

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

Following changes to legislation, (Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR)), spare seats can only be offered on vehicles with more than 22 seats where the vehicles meet these requirements.

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

Yes. If the policy has not been applied correctly or there are exceptional circumstances be considered, parents/carers can ask for the 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.

**Types of travel assistance offered**

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

The Transport Commissioning Service will offer the student the most economical form of travel assistance. The team will look at the following options in order:

- travel pass for use on public bus and rail transport
- cycle allowance (at the request of the parent/carer and not used in conjunction with any other option)
- travel pass for use on school and college contract services (bus)
- cash grant (only where there are no existing travel options)

Provided that the application is received in time, travel passes for use on the bus will be posted in August. Details regarding pick-up and drop-off points and time, name of the operator and expectations of how the child should behave on the journey to and from school will be included.

## **26. 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 school. It also has a duty to consider the most sustainable travel options for all eligible children as well as considering whether the child will arrive to school in a 'fit state to learn'. If the arrangements are not suitable, a suitability appeal can be submitted to review the arrangements. Information will be required to support a review of the arrangements which would demonstrate why the current arrangements are not suitable. For further details please see the school and college transport webpage.

### **Conditions of assistance**

## **27. Are there any conditions that I/my child have to abide by when accepting travel assistance from the council?**

Travel assistance is provided to and from school for children who qualify under the Home to School Travel Assistance policy. This on the basis that parents, children, schools, Council and transport operators have a shared responsibility for its safe and secure operation in the interests of all the parties. A number of considerations are set out below:

### **Children's behaviour:**

The Council may suspend its provision of travel assistance or employ other sanctions, as it considers appropriate, in the case of any pupil or student whose behaviour during the journey to or from their school is not of an acceptable standard. This includes smoking or vaping on buses. In addition, schools can employ a number of sanctions ranging from detention to exclusion in order to deal with persistent misbehaviour on school transport.

If the child causes a disruption or jeopardises the safety of passengers or road users, we can change their travel assistance arrangements or suspend them from

receiving travel assistance. It will then parents/carers responsibility to get the child to and from school.

If the child causes deliberate damage to a vehicle, parents/carers will be invoiced for the cost of repairs.

### **Parental responsibilities:**

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

Assessments regarding the safety of a particular walking route assume in each case that children are accompanied. It is therefore necessary for parents/carers to make arrangements for their child to be accompanied to and from the school by another responsible person, if they themselves cannot be available.

### **Council responsibilities:**

Travel assistance is effective from date the child was assessed as being eligible. The Transport Commissioning Service have 10 working days in which to send a bus pass out to parents/carers or allocate them to a vehicle. The Transport Commissioning Service are responsible for managing the contracts, including any complaints or safeguarding concerns on the vehicle. They may apply sanctions to the company for not meeting the requirements of the contract or terminate the contract completely should there be sufficient evidence to support this. The Service aims to communicate any termination with parents/carers, where time allows. This may be at short notice in some circumstances.

## **28. Are there any circumstances where travel assistance could be withdrawn?**

Yes:

- where, for any reason, travel assistance has been approved in error, the Council reserves the right to withdraw that provision and will normally do so, after giving notice of its intention
- where there is a change to the walking route (e.g. the building of a new road or path) or the re-classification of a hazardous route (e.g. as a result of a pedestrian crossing being installed) which brings the home to school distance within the prescribed distance or the route has been reassessed as being safe to walk. In these cases, pupils will no longer be entitled to free travel assistance. Parents/carers will be provided with one term's notice of the Council's intention to withdraw the travel assistance.

- where a child has demonstrated unacceptable behaviour
- where a child moves house or school and no longer fulfils the eligibility criteria.

### **29. Will my child need to carry their bus pass every day?**

Yes. All children need to carry their pass and show it to the driver every day. If they do not carry the pass they will be expected to pay the bus fare or may be refused access to the vehicle.

### **30. What happens if my child loses their bus pass?**

Parents/carers should promptly notify the Transport Commissioning Service. They will be required to pay £15 for a replacement bus pass. Go to the [school and college transport webpage](#) or call us on 0300 123 7039. Please quote your child's reference number.

### **Change of details/circumstances**

#### **31. What happens if we move house or my child changes school?**

When parents/carers move house, it is important to consider how the child will get to and from school or whether to move the child to a nearer school. It is not the Council's responsibility to provide travel assistance to maintain an existing placement.

Parents/carers will need to submit an application from the new address or to the new school. Another assessment will be completed to determine if the child is attending the nearest school to the home address. Any eligibility to travel assistance previously does not mean that a child will continue to be eligible for travel assistance.

#### **32. What if I need to cancel my child's travel assistance?**

Please contact the Transport Commissioning Service as soon as possible by emailing [schooltransportenquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransportenquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

To recommence travel assistance, please contact the Transport Commissioning Service providing at least 5 working days' notice.

### **Questions once travel assistance is set up**

#### **33. Can my child eat and drink on the travel assistance vehicle?**

No. Eating and drinking is not permitted on vehicles.

#### **34. 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 first, such as whether the equipment is available at the school.

### **35. What if my child needs to take medication to school?**

Medication should be stored in a sealed container and placed inside the child's bag. Should there be a requirement to administer medication during the journey to or from the school, parents/carers 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 the child has a Health Care Plan, please share any relevant information to assist in completing a risk assessment.

#### **Further information**

- Transport commissioning service - telephone 0300 123 7039 or email [schooltransportenquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransportenquiries@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)
- The Department for Education's website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>