



## **Travel assistance policy for 0-25 year olds in education**

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## **Introduction. Key Principles and Types of Travel Assistance**

1. This document sets out the policy of Birmingham City Council (“the Council”) in relation to the provision of travel assistance for 0-25 year olds in education who are resident within the City of Birmingham. It is available on the Council’s website at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/travelassist](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/travelassist). It is intended to provide clarity for children, young persons, adults, parents and carers facing a wide range of circumstances. We are always looking to improve the information we make available and will use any feedback provided to us to develop this statement. If you wish to provide any feedback on the policy please contact Travel Assist ([travelassist@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:travelassist@birmingham.gov.uk)).
2. This policy is divided up by the following age groups as the relevant legal provisions in the Education Act 1996 are grouped this way:

**Part 1:** Pre-compulsory school age (0



transport budgets wherever appropriate as this helps individuals and families to have the most control over their travel arrangements.

**Parental involvement:** Parents are expected to accompany their children to school or college where necessary until they turn 18 unless there is a good reason why it is not reasonable to expect them to do so.

**Reviews of travel assistance:** All grants of travel assistance will be reviewed at least once per year and in all cases where there is, or may be, a significant change in circumstances affecting eligibility for travel assistance (e.g. change in school or home address, change in personal or family circumstances, change in recipient's needs). Where the recipient of travel assistance has an EHC plan then this review will be undertaken at or following the annual review of the plan. Any changes to travel assistance following a review will be implemented from the beginning of the next academic term, or sooner by mutual agreement.

**Travel concessions, bursaries, state benefits etc:** The Council expects young persons of sixth form age and young adults who apply for travel assistance to have applied for and/or made use of all travel concessions, bursaries, state benefits (including mobility cars) etc. for which they are eligible.

**Travel for other purposes:** When taking discretionary decisions about the provision of travel assistance the Council may take into account how the applicant travels (or is able to travel) for non-educational purposes, e.g. recreation, shopping, family visits etc.

### **Types of Travel Assistance**

5. The Education Act 1996 and this policy use the phrase 'travel assistance' because the form this takes will vary and often does not involve the Council providing any transport at all. The Council will determine what is appropriate in each case, taking account of its legal obligations, the needs of the applicant, safety considerations, the best use of the Council's resources, any expressed preference and any other relevant matter. As a guide, the

following are the types of provision made in most cases:

**Travel pass** – This is a free pass for the use on public transport and is the most common form of travel assistance provided.

**Personal Transport Budget** – This will be paid on a monthly basis over 11 months to the parent or carer (in the case of those under-18) or the individual or a person acting on their behalf (in the case of those over-18). The parent/carer or adult individual then assumes full responsibility for the travel arrangements and getting the child or themselves to their place of education on time and achieving good attendance. It is anticipated that the use of personal transport budgets can meet most individual and family's needs. The Council encourages their use wherever appropriate.

**Transport vehicles** – The provision of a vehicle to transport a child, young person or adult to and from their place of education. Vehicles and drivers are provided by a suitably qualified, registered, commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. Whenever possible, individuals will travel together in a suitable vehicle, specially adapted as necessary to meet their needs. Each route will be planned on the basis of the start and finish times of the place of education and the shortest possible route for all

and where parents or carers are not reasonably able to accompany them.

**Other** – The Council may provide any other form of travel assistance which is considered suitable and will consider any suggestions from applicants about any particular type of travel assistance

## **Part 1: Pre-schoolers aged 0-4 (pre-compulsory school age)**

6. The Council's policy is not to provide travel assistance to pre-schoolers except where the pre-schooler has an EHC plan and the circumstances can be said to be exceptional. Even where the Council does provide travel assistance to a pre-schooler it will make a charge for this, which will be calculated in the same way as the charge for the provision of travel to young persons as set out in Part 3.
  
7. The Council will consider whatever is said in any application but will have particular regard to the following:
  - Distance and journey time from the pre-schooler's home to their place of education and the cost of providing travel assistance to there
  - What alternative means of facilitating attendance there may be
  - What alternative placements or options there may be
  - The contents of any EHC plan (including anything about transport)
  - The best use of the Council's resources and the competing claims upon them





route that a child might reasonably be expected to walk to school accompanied where necessary by a parent or carer.

14. Where a parent or carer chooses a school for the child but there is a qualifying school nearer to home which he or she could attend then travel assistance is not available under this heading. In the case of children with an EHC plan there may be cases where a school that is not the nearest qualifying school is named on the basis that the parents will be responsible for transporting them. Where this happens the EHC plan will be worded accordingly and make the position clear.

#### Category 2: Low income families

15. "Low income family" means one where the child or young person is entitled to free school meals or where one or both parents are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit. Children or young people in such families who do not qualify for travel assistance in category 1 (distance) above are nonetheless entitled to travel assistance if they satisfy the following criteria:

Primary Aged Children: Children aged between 8 and 11 years of age from low income families are entitled to free travel assistance where they are attending their nearest qualifying school and that school is more than 2 miles from their home.

### Category 3: Unsafe walking route

16. Travel assistance will be provided for all children and young people who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.
  
17. The safety of a particular route will normally be assessed by an officer from Travel Assist in conjunction with an officer from the Council's Transport Department.

### Category 4: Special Educational needs or disability

18. Children and young people who do not qualify for travel assistance under category 1 (distance), category 2 (low income) or category 3 (unsafe route) above are nonetheless entitled to travel assistance if they are attending the nearest qualifying school to their home which is suitable for their needs but have special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem and for this reason cannot reasonably be expected to walk to that school, even if accompanied.
  
19. As noted above in relation to category 1, in the case of children with an EHC plan there may be cases where a school that is not the nearest qualifying school is named on the basis that the parents will be responsible for transporting them. Where this happens the EHC plan will be worded accordingly and make the position clear.



Any preference to attend a particular educational establishment based on religion or belief;

The nature of the young person's special educational needs, disability or learning difficulty;

Anything said in an EHC plan about transport;

Whether there is a nearer institution which is suitable and can provide the same or similar qualification(s);

The best use of the Council's resources.

22. As set out in the Key Principles above, the Council will also expect applicants first to have applied for and made use of all other sources of assistance.

Financial assistance may be available from (or by applying through) the school or further education institution in question and Appendix 2 sets out full details of these schemes. In addition there are various concessionary travel schemes in Birmingham which may be available and these are set out in Appendix 3.

23. If the Council agrees to provide travel assistance it will usually take one of the forms set out at page 4 above.

24. Where the travel assistance consists of a taxi or specialist vehicle, the young person and/or his or her parents or carers will be required to contribute towards the cost of this. The amount that will be required is £780 per academic year or £390 if the young person is from a low income family. The Council will consider a young person to be from a low income family if he or she falls into any of the categories below:

Families in receipt of Income Support.

Families in receipt of Income Based Jobseekers Allowance (IB JSA).

Families who receive Child Tax Credit and have an annual income below the relevant threshold.

Families who receive Employment and Support Allowance (Income related).

Families who receive The Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit.

Families who receive support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Families in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

Families in receipt of benefits that supersede those listed above.

25. Young persons who receive Income Support or income based Job Seekers Allowance in their own right will also be considered to be from a low income family.
26. The payment is a contribution towards the cost of providing the transport and the Council will fund the balance. This contribution is required due to the high cost of such transport and the Council's limited resources. It enables the Council to provide transport and travel assistance to a greater number of young people with special educational needs or disability or learning difficulties than would otherwise be the case.
27. The amount of contribution will be reviewed annually and will take account of any change in the relevant Council budget. Any changes will be notified to the affected young persons and their parents or carers. This transport policy statement will be amended and re-published where any costs are changed.
28. Appendix 2 is a list of sources of travel support available to young persons through schools and further education institutions. Enquiries and applications in respect of these should be made through the young person's school or institution.
29. Appendix 3 is a list of travel concessions which may be available to young persons.
30. Appendix 4 is a list (in alphabetical order) of schools, Academies and Free Schools with sixth forms in the Council's area.





assistance should take and (where applicable) whether any charge will be made.

40. If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the Council, or the applicant disagrees with the type of travel assistance offered, there is a right of appeal as set out below. During the appeal stages, travel assistance will not normally be provided and changes to existing travel assistance will not normally be made.

41. Appeals should be made within 20 working days of the decision being received by the parents or carers and on the appropriate form which can be obtained by contacting Travel Assist as follows:

- Telephone: 0121 303 4955
- Email: [travelassist@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:travelassist@birmingham.gov.uk)
- Website: [www.birmingham.gov.uk/travelassist](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/travelassist)

42. The appeal will need to set out the exact nature and grounds of the appeal. The appeals process has two stages:

**Stage 1** – A Council officer will consider the appeal within 5 working days of the receipt of the appeal form and the applicant will receive confirmation that the appeal is under review. Further evidence may be requested to support the appeal and consultation with caseworkers and professional bodies may be required.







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