



SEND Travel Assistance Policy

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Document summary

The purpose of this document is to set out how East Sussex County Council (ESCC) will determine eligibility for travel assistance (provision of special transport or financial support) for students of statutory school age up to the end of Year 11 and nursery age, who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It should be read with the [Statutory Transport Policy](#).

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About this document: Accessibility help

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CTRL and click on the table of contents to navigate.

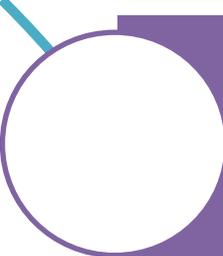
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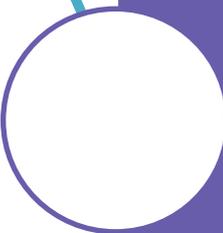
1. Qualifying for SEND travel assistance

Travel assistance for children living in East Sussex is given when one of the criteria set out below are met, regardless of SEN or disability (see the [Statutory Transport Policy](#) for more details):

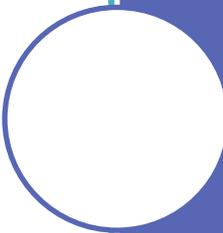
- ✓ Statutory walking distance (the distance to the nearest suitable school is more than three miles for children over eight, and two miles for those under eight years old)
- ✓ Families on low incomes when the walking distance is over 2 miles
- ✓ Disabled parents or carers of primary-aged children who cannot otherwise get to school



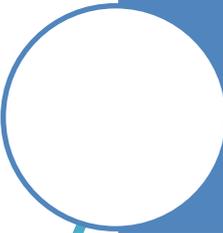
Many families with children with SEND will prefer to make their own arrangements to get their child to school rather than requesting travel support from the Local Authority. We also encourage parents and carers to work with the Local Authority to enable their child with SEND to travel independently if and when appropriate.



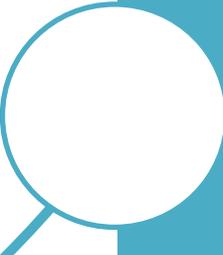
Travel assistance is not automatically given just because a child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, and many students with SEN and disabilities are able to travel to school without additional support from the Local Authority. However, some children with specific needs will require more support, often for an agreed period of time.



Some children with SEND may not be able walk or travel by public transport to school because of their needs. If the home to school distance does not meet the statutory minimum, a child will not qualify for free transport unless their mobility problems or other health and safety concerns related to their SEN or disability indicate that they could not be reasonably expected to walk the distance, accompanied as necessary.



A child's individual needs will determine the support they are given and evidence will be taken from a range of professionals and from parents or carers.



Where relevant, a risk assessment will be carried out before the child begins travelling to make sure that the transport provided meets their needs. These will include a detailed breakdown of the child's needs and control measures, detailing how they will be kept safe while travelling. This will include whether a passenger assistant will be required and any necessary medical protocols.

Reception to Year 11

- Travel assistance is provided to the child's nearest suitable school. This is the nearest maintained school or academy to the child's home that can meet the child's SEND. If, by parental choice, a more distant school is attended, any transport shall stay the responsibility of the parent. If the child has an EHC Plan, this may name the parents' or carers' choice of school but this does not mean that the Council must provide travel assistance if, in the Council's view, the child's needs could be suitably met at a nearer school.

Early Years

- Children below compulsory school age attending the nearest suitable special school for assessment purposes may be entitled to home to pre-school transport if exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated, which result in the family being unable to get the child to the placement without travel support (having exhausted all possible alternatives). If discretionary support is offered, it will be the most cost-efficient option for the Council. Parent / carers would be expected to make a contribution towards total costs in line with the post 16 SEND transport contribution.

Respite transport

- The Council will use discretion to offer travel assistance to children using SEND transport between school and their respite placement during school term time, if there is no other means of transport, or it is not reasonable to expect parents to transport them. As this is a discretionary area, parents may be asked to contribute towards additional costs.

Residential Schools

- Where a child attends a residential school and is entitled to transport assistance, this is provided at the start and end of each half-term or, at the start and end of each week depending on the boarding arrangements. Transport is also provided for official school closures. Transport will not be provided at other times or for parental visits for meetings.

2. Travel assistance and support for children with SEND

'Hired' or SEN transport

- Hired transport by taxi or minibus will be provided in exceptional cases, or if there is no suitable alternative.
- Transport is usually shared with other children (up to the vehicle's capacity), which can result in longer journey times. Alternatively, there may be a school coach service which your child will be able to use. Please see the main Statutory Transport policy for service standards on hired vehicles and information relating to when hired transport is not supplied.
- Passenger assistants are provided on hired transport only where the child has a severe physical condition, a medical condition requiring immediate treatment, or severe behavioural difficulties meaning the health and safety of the child, driver or anyone else travelling in the vehicle would be at risk.
- The use of a passenger assistant will be reviewed regularly since the need may change as the child grows older.
- A passenger assistant's duty is to supervise children in the vehicle and to help with boarding and leaving the vehicle where the pupil has physical, sensory or medical difficulties. However, they are not able to collect pupils from the front door or take them into school if that would mean leaving other vulnerable children unattended.

Personal Travel Budgets

- Once transport eligibility has been confirmed, the offer of a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) for families will be explored.
- A PTB is offered at the Council's discretion. We need to ensure that the offer of a PTB is cost effective whilst ensuring families have the opportunity for increased choice and control.
- The PTB payment can help you to arrange your child's travel to school in a way which suits your circumstances and could offer more flexibility, for example, around breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The amount you receive is calculated using the distance for a return journey from your home to your child's nearest suitable school, although a lower rate may be offered if an existing more cost effective option (taxi or minibus) is turned down.
- Payments are made into a designated bank account on a monthly basis, and do not affect any other benefits. The Council can be asked for advice on the PTB, and how the PTB can be changed or cancelled. One month's notice is needed to arrange alternative travel assistance.
- If punctuality or attendance at school is becoming affected by a PTB, the arrangement will be reviewed by the Council. Non-attendance of more than 10 days in a school year (5%) will result in the family being asked to return the overpayment (this could be done via a reduction in subsequent monthly payments).

Independent Travel

- If a child meets the distance criteria and is able to use public transport to get to and from school, they will be issued with a free bus or train ticket.
- At secondary school, independent travel training (ITT) can enable the learner to use public transport or travel independently as part of their transition into adulthood.
- ITT can help support independence by developing personal, social and life skills .
- As part of an ongoing review, we will consider the capability of a young person to travel independently. If they are assessed as suitable, we will expect secondary aged students to start travel training to become independent travellers.
- The training will be given by qualified staff following an approved programme in partnership with schools, and includes communication with parents or carers.
- The Council will try to make sure that ITT is available to all children with SEND to support them to travel independently.

3. Application process

Parents and carers should complete the online application form:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/free/schoolsend/applying

If your child doesn't have an EHC plan and you believe they require help with the journey due to a disability or medical need, please visit:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/free/medical-condition/>

Your child must be attending his or her nearest suitable school to qualify for help.

4. Review of transport provision

We need to ensure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the child's need. Travel assistance will be reviewed with parents and education and care professionals who know the child and are part of the EHC Plan review.

The Council may also review eligibility by a scheduled meeting or by telephone contact. Parents will be told of all decisions in writing.

5. Travel assistance for Post-16 SEND students

When a young person starts post-16 education, local authorities no longer have to provide free transport to their educational placement – this provision is discretionary.

As part of a young person's transition to adulthood, it is hoped that as many young people with SEND as possible will have started to travel independently by the time they reach college age. A Disabled Person's Bus Pass gives free travel after 9.30am and if entitled, the Council expects students to use it if they are able and if there is a suitable bus service.

If a student's SEND and family circumstances mean that it will be very difficult for them to get to their placement (which must be the nearest suitable according to their EHC Plan) then they can apply for discretionary travel assistance.

Please see the separate policy for post-16 SEND travel assistance for further information, and visit the webpages at

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/free/over16send.

Please also refer to the post-16 Transport Statement for further information on support:

www.c360.org.uk/travel/extra-help

6. Appeals

You have the right to appeal if you are unhappy with:

- a decision not to agree transport, or
- the type of travel support being offered.

To appeal, complete the [form](#)

You should explain the reasons for your appeal and provide any further, additional and/or up to date evidence that supports your appeal, such as medical evidence, or an up to date financial statement.

The Appeal Panel is made up of three elected County Councillors. They can only agree assistance in the most exceptional circumstances. In reaching their decision, the Panel will consider your original application and supporting documentation, together with your appeal application and further supporting documentation. The Panel's decision is final.

Find out about [appeal panel members and future meetings](#).

The school transport policies can be found online at:

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/strategy/download>