



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Travel Assistance Statement for young people resident in Wokingham post-16, including young people with SEND**

**Academic Year 2025/26**

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## Introduction

Wokingham Borough Council publishes a Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy each year to explain the travel options and support available for young people continuing their education or training after Year 11.

While local authorities are not required to provide free or subsidised transport for Post-16 learners, we do have a duty to publish this information by 31 May each year. Our aim is to make sure families understand what help is available and to encourage the use of sustainable travel options such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

This policy covers:

- Who it applies to – young people aged 16–19 (Years 12, 13, 14) and learners with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) up to age 25.
- What support is available – including local schemes, assistance for those with additional needs, and guidance on independent travel.
- How to apply – Students receiving a Personal Travel Budget or Council-operated transport from the Local Authority must reapply for travel assistance each academic year

Our approach supports independence, prepares young people for adulthood and employment, and contributes to Wokingham's Climate Emergency Action Plan by reducing emissions and improving air quality.

The policy also explains how we work to remove transport barriers for vulnerable learners, including those at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and young parents under 20 (through the Care to Learn scheme).

For full details of national guidance, please refer to [\*\*Transport to education and training for people aged 16 and over\*\*](#). You can also find information about travel support for statutory school age in our separate policy.

## Travel Assistance Offered by External Organisations

The Council seeks to support all Post 16 students to continue with their education and training. Through running this scheme and providing information about the bursary funding available to support student access to education through their Post 16 education provider (FE colleges and school 6th Forms), the Council considers it has met its statutory duties regarding the majority of students.

### **1. Concessionary fares scheme available**

On most local bus routes operators offer reduced fares for under 19s. This helps ensure that students can buy passes at reduced rates, including those for travel to establishments outside the Borough.

### **2. Bursaries available from your Education Provider**

Students should contact their school, sixth form college, or further education college to find out about financial and other support available - for example, help with childcare or other costs. They can also visit Learner Support: Overview - GOV.UK ( [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) )

### **3. The 16-19 Bursary Fund**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, administered by individual education providers, is available to support any young person who faces genuine financial barriers to participation in education, including transport costs. All education providers must make available a copy of their 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy. Applications should be made directly to the education provider.

For further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund, visit: [www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund](http://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund). Key local providers and contact details can be found on the [Council Local Offer website](#).

There are two types of 16-19 bursary available;

### **4. Vulnerable Student Bursary**

You could get a bursary worth up to £1,200, depending on your circumstances and benefits.

### **5. Discretionary Bursary**

You could get a discretionary bursary if you need financial help but do not qualify for a bursary for students in vulnerable groups. Your education or training provider decides how much you get and what it is used for.

If you are over 19, you will only be eligible for a discretionary bursary.

For further information on the Vulnerable Students Bursary and the Discretionary Bursary, including the eligibility criteria and how to apply, visit the [GOV.UK website](#).

## **6. Residential Support Scheme**

You may be able to get help with the cost of accommodation from the Residential Bursary Fund (RBF).

You must:

- meet the residency requirements (your college will check this)
- be at least 16 and under 19 on 31 August 2023

You may be eligible if you are 19 and either:

- continuing a course, you started aged 16 to 18
- have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) Your course must:
  - ✓ be at a Specialist Residential Centre (your college can confirm this)
  - ✓ be too far to travel to each day (your college must agree with this)
  - ✓ be full-time
  - ✓ be '16 to 19 funded' (your college can confirm this)

### **What you will get**

Your college will decide how much you get. It depends on your household income. You can get payments for a maximum of 3 years.

## **7. Care to Learn**

The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs while you study. You must be aged under 20 at the start of your course.

The scheme is available for publicly funded courses in England.

You can get up to:

- £180 per child per week, if you live outside London.
- £195 per child per week, if you live in London.

## What it covers

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- your childcare, including deposit and registration fees
- a childcare taster session for up to 5 days
- keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays
- taking your child to their childcare provider

## Payments

Childcare payments go directly to your childcare provider.

Before they can be paid:

- your childcare provider needs to confirm your child's attendance
- your school or college needs to confirm that you are attending your course

Travel payments go direct to your school or college – they will either pay you or arrange travel for you.

## When payments stop

Payments end when:

- you stop attending your course
- you reach the end of your course
- your child stops attending childcare

## 8. Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)

SENDIASS Wokingham provide free, confidential and impartial advice, guidance and support for;

- Parents of children and young people up to the age of 25 with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Children and young people up to the age of 25 with special educational needs and disabilities

For more information visit [About us \(sendiasswokingham.org.uk\)](http://sendiasswokingham.org.uk)

## Travel Assistance Offered by Wokingham Borough Council

The Local Authority has a **discretionary** power to provide Travel Assistance to those past Year 11 or over 16 years.

Whilst there is no legal duty to provide free or subsidised transport to all post-16 students, the scheme operating under this policy recognises that the Authority needs to support all young people including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

### 9. Students of sixth-form age

This is defined as;

- Being a person receiving education or training at an establishment and he/she is over compulsory school age but is under the age of 19 or has begun a particular course at the establishment before attaining the age of 19 and continues to attend that course, **or**
- Is over the age of 16 and out of cohort, for example repeating year 11.

This definition also applies to a young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) up to age 25, if they are continuing a course started before their 19th birthday.

### 10. Eligibility Criteria for Local Authority Support

#### Post-16 Students: 16 - to 18-year-olds

A young person will qualify for Travel Assistance if they are a **resident of the Wokingham Borough and have an EHCP**. They must be attending their nearest education/training provider, allocated by the Local Authority, identified in their most current EHCP as meeting their needs, or a nearer qualifying provider.

In addition, in order to qualify for travel assistance, the young person must meet the following criteria;

- Their learning difficulty or disability prevents them from walking to school or college or from using public transport, accompanied as necessary **Or**
- They have other exceptional circumstances which impacts on their ability to use public transport arrangements and are not able to travel independently or safely, accompanied as necessary **and** they live more than 3 miles from their nearest provider.

## **19 - to 25-year-olds attending a further education college/free-standing sixth form college (continuing a course started before their 19th birthday)**

Please note, travel assistance will not be provided under this section for young people who have left education and are returning after the age of 19. **Those re-starting education after their 19th birthday will be assessed as adults.**

A young person will qualify for Travel Assistance if they are a resident of the Wokingham Borough and have an EHCP. They must be attending their nearest education/training provider, allocated by the Local Authority, identified in their most current EHCP as meeting their needs, or a nearer qualifying provider.

In addition, in order to qualify for travel assistance, the young person must meet the following criteria;

- They are attending a full-time college course (equivalent to a minimum of 12 hours per week, usually across at least 3 days per week for the duration of the course) which the Local Authority agrees can make the appropriate educational/training provision and are not able to travel independently or safely.
- Their learning difficulty or disability prevents them from walking to school or college or from using public transport, accompanied as necessary

**Or**

- They have other exceptional circumstances which impact on their ability to use public transport arrangements and are not able to travel independently or safely, accompanied as necessary **and** they live more than 3 miles from their nearest provider.

**Travel assistance will only be considered to the nearest education/training provider with post 16 provision which, in the opinion of WBC, offers an appropriate course. An appropriate course is one that enables the young person to meet their learning and/or employment objectives or is specifically designed to meet the student's special educational needs at a:**

- School,
- Further education institution,
- Council maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education,
- Establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency, or a
- Learning provider delivering accredited programmes of learning, which lead to positive outcomes and are funded by the council (for example, colleges, charities, and private learning providers).

If a young person chooses to undertake a further education course at a school or provider outside of Wokingham, travel assistance will only be considered if the school or provider attended is the nearest one providing an appropriate course and the journey is three miles or more. If a place is available on a comparable course at a nearer school or provider in Wokingham, no assistance will be provided.

## **11. Wokingham borough Council Travel Assistance Offer**

The standard offer of Travel Assistance for students aged 16-19 is a **Personal Transport Budget (PTB)**. A PTB is a direct payment to you and is designed to help you to get your child to school/college. It replaces council-organised transport (COT), although requests for traditional transport methods will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**The term “Travel Assistance” is used to describe the options of EITHER a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) or Council-Organised Transport (COT).**

The legislation that applies to 19+ students is slightly different and for that reason, families of this group may still be offered council-organised transport (COT) or a PTB.

For all eligible students moving into post 16 education for the first time they will need to apply for a PTB if they require Travel Assistance, as this is the standard offer. Following their application acceptance and approval of eligibility, if families feel that the only way they can get their child to school is by using traditional transport (e.g., taxi or minibus), you will be able to appeal the offer of a PTB in order that the Council can consider your individual and/or any exceptional circumstances.

## **12. Annual Re-Application and Deadlines**

All post-16 students who receive travel assistance, whether through a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) or Council-Organised Transport (COT), must reapply every academic year. **This applies to all students.**

**Travel assistance arrangements will automatically terminate on 31 July each year.** Continued eligibility cannot be assumed beyond this date without a new application being submitted and approved by the SEND Transport Panel. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that a new application is submitted for the forthcoming academic year.

Applications should be made as soon as the learner's school or college place is confirmed and **no later than 31 May**. Applications received after this date may result in travel assistance not being available at the start of the autumn term.

### **13. Exceptional Circumstances**

The offer and type of Post 16 transport remains at the discretion of the Council, but we will take into consideration individual circumstances and the needs of your child (including a consideration of your application form, the EHCP and any current transport risk assessment that the Council has undertaken).

The Council is aware that all children to whom this policy applies will have varying degrees of SEND. Some examples that the Council would not ordinarily see as exceptional (in their own right) are:

- Single parent families
- Parent(s) that work
- Having other children to look after and/or at other schools
- Living in a rural area with or without access to public transport
- Parents/students unable to drive or having access to a car
- Students in wheelchairs

However, it is likely that a family with a number of those circumstances listed above could be classed as exceptional. By the very nature of 'exceptions', the Council recognises that there may be many reasons why a student could only access school/college using council approved transport; so, it naturally follows that it will be for parents to demonstrate that.

The Council will consider any exceptional circumstances advised for individuals on a case-by- case basis.

### **14. Personal Transport Budgets**

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) is a payment designed to help you to get your child to school. It is available to SEND children who have been assessed as eligible to receive Home to School transport by Wokingham Borough Council.

A PTB is granted at the discretion of the Council, therefore even if your child is assessed as being eligible to Travel Assistance, you may not be granted a PTB if it is not cost effective for the Council to do so (for example, if your child could be placed onto existing transport at no additional cost to the authority).

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) is a payment to help you to get your child to school or college. You can use the PTB in any way you wish that enables your child to get to school or college. However, a PTB is not intended to cover the full cost of a door-to-door taxi service. It is a contribution towards transport costs, giving families flexibility and choice in how they arrange travel.

## Why choose a personal transport budget (PTB)?

- Freedom to make your own arrangements – to suit your family
- Control over how the money is spent
- Your child may feel more secure and relaxed at school or college
- You can share the cost and save money by joining up with other parents
- You could use the money to help your child become more independent

## Calculation of the PTB amount

- PTB is based on the **straight-line distance** from home to school or college.
- There are three distance bands shown in the table below, assuming attendance 5 days a week. If your child attends fewer days, the amount is adjusted pro rata.
- Online maps can give you an idea of the distance, but the Council will confirm the official measurement.

<b>Band</b>	<b>One-way distance from home to school (miles)</b>	<b>Personal Transport Budget Payment</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Up to 5 miles</b>	<b>£2000 per annum</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>5 to 10 miles</b>	<b>£3000 per annum</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Over 10 miles</b>	<b>£5000 per annum</b>

PTB payments are made based on your child attending school for 190 days per year. If your child attends school less than 190 school days per school year, or starts during the school year, Wokingham Borough Council will make your PTB payment on a pro-rata basis.

PTB payments will also not be made for days when your child is not required to attend school/college (e.g., study leave or other authorised absence from school/college premises). This means you may receive less than the total amount outlined above. Wokingham Borough Council will send you a schedule each year that will detail what your expected termly payments will be, based on 100% attendance (taking into account your child's timetable). Parents must confirm within 14 days if this schedule is incorrect. Failure to do so may mean that it is not possible to remedy underpayments at a later date.

Should your child be absent from school, even if this is through no fault of their own, your following term's payment will be reduced to account for the reduction in required travel. Free school transport is also not available for work experience or additional journeys that the school requires your child to take. You will be notified of the reduction that will be made in the following term's payment before that term's payment is due to be paid.

## **Change of circumstances**

You must notify the Council immediately in writing or by email about any change in your circumstances that may affect your eligibility to Travel Assistance and/or your PTB payment, for example:

- If you move address or change school/college or school/college site.
- Change of timetable that affects your child's school hours or days.
- Long term absences (5 consecutive school days or more).

If you fail to notify the Council of any change to your circumstances, which the Council later decides would have had the effect of reducing or ending your child's entitlement to payments then the Council may terminate your PTB payments and will seek to recover any monies that you should not have received for the period in which you failed to notify.

If you are unsure about whether a change of circumstances will affect the PTB payments, you are advised to discuss this with the Council.

If any change to your circumstances means that your child's eligibility for Travel Assistance is withdrawn, then the PTB payments will cease.

## **Change of payment**

There are circumstances in which the amount of PTB payment may be reviewed, adjusted, suspended or terminated. These are:

- Your child's attendance falls below 90%.
- Your child regularly arrives late at school/college in the mornings.
- Your child arrives at school/college in an unfit state to learn.
- The travel arrangements that have been put in place for your child using the PTB are deemed to be unsuitable or unsafe.
- Your child accesses short break stays away from the family home.
- There is a change to national legislation and/or the Council's policies.
- You have more than one child, or other member of the same household, each receiving a PTB and attending the same school/college or another school/college nearby

## **Review of PTB arrangements**

The PTB will be reviewed on a regular basis. As part of the PTB review, the Council will contact your child's school/ college to request their attendance records to confirm their level of attendance, and that they are able to fully access their learning opportunities.

Once this information has been received and the review has been completed, any decision to adjust or withdraw the PTB will be given to you in writing.

Payment of the PTB will be paid into a nominated bank account every term in advance. In exceptional circumstances, alternative payment arrangements may be made by agreement between you and the Council.

### **Using your Personal Transport Budget (PTB)**

You can use your PTB flexibly to support your young person's attendance at school or college. The key requirement is that the funding must be used in a way that ensures reliable and consistent access to education.

Examples of how you might use the PTB include:

- Driving your child to and from school or college yourself.
- Arranging for a friend or relative to walk or cycle with your child.
- Car sharing with other families.
- Providing a bus pass for your child or for someone to accompany them.
- Paying for a place on a school- or college-organised transport service.
- Using it towards the cost of a taxi, either individually or shared with other families.
- Paying for childcare for another child, enabling you to accompany your eligible child.

If you choose to employ someone directly using the PTB, you are responsible for complying with all relevant legal obligations, including Tax and National Insurance, Employment Law, Insurance, and Health and Safety regulations.

The Council always recommends that you have a check carried out by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) on anyone that you are thinking of employing.

If you use the PTB to enter into contracts with organisations e.g., after school clubs, or individuals: you are responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of those contracts e.g., payment arrangements, notice of cancellation, etc.

The Council advises you to seek your own independent legal advice on the terms of the agreement that you may be entering into and any obligations that are placed on you.

### **You will:**

- have control over how the payment is used that allows you to get your child to school or college.
- accept responsibility for the decisions made regarding the use of the payments and understand what the consequences are for misuse.

### **You cannot use your payment:**

- To buy or utilise space on transport services from the Council.
- For any purpose that does not enable you to get your child to or from school/college.
- For any activity that is illegal, unlawful, or unsafe.
- For other purposes that may bring the Council into disrepute.

Although you have control over how payments are spent, the money can be reclaimed by the Council if it is not used in accordance with this Guidance.

If you are granted a PTB, you may wish to discuss this with your child's school/college as they may be able to put you in touch with other parents who also receive a PTB. You could look into working collectively to ensure the best use of the PTB for all the children and families.

### **Terminating the PTB agreement**

- You can cancel your PTB at any time. However, if you do, the Council cannot arrange alternative transport until the start of the next term.
- If you cancel, you must also inform anyone you have hired or contracted under the PTB.
- If the Council decides to end your PTB, you will receive at least one month's written notice.

### **15. Unsuccessful Applicants**

If your child or young person is not eligible for the PTB, you may be able to purchase a spare seat on an existing Council operated bus route, if a spare seat is available.

You may want to ask your college or sixth form for details of any bursary schemes they may have to help with expenses. If your application for home to school transport has been unsuccessful, you can **appeal the decision**. Further information on the appeals process can be found below.

## **16. Independent Travel Training**

In line with the Council's aims and objectives to support independence and prepare young people for adulthood, and where appropriate employment, Independent Travel Training (ITT) will be expanded as an option. The Council will identify young people, and those who will be transitioning from compulsory education into Post 16, and above, who could benefit from ITT and contact their families with a view to undertaking an ITT assessment.

An ITT assessment will be carried out with the support of the family and/or school, to confirm the suitability of the young person for the one-to-one ITT programme, considering the following criteria:

- The likelihood of the pupil being eligible for SEN transport under the 16 to 19 policy
- Existing level of independent travel skills
- The age of the pupil
- The distance between home and school
- The SEND of the pupil
- The route which the young person would need to undertake
- Journey times using public transport and the complexity of the journey
- The frequency of the journeys required.

This assessment would take place before the pupil undertakes the ITT programme, which would last for approximately four to six weeks. During the programme, the pupil will travel to and from their education or training provision each day with their dedicated one to one ITT trainer both in the morning and afternoon from the home to the school and vice versa.

During the period when a pupil is taking part in the ITT, this will be their Travel Assistance offer. At the end of the ITT programme, the Council will review the pupils' progress with the family to decide if it is appropriate for the pupil to continue to travel independently. If it is not appropriate for the pupil to travel independently, their Travel Assistance offer will be reviewed.

Although the vast majority of young people are successfully supported to achieve and benefit immensely from becoming independent travelers, it is however acknowledged that for some young people, due to the nature of their SEND, ITT will not be appropriate.

## **17. Review of eligibility**

If a young person is assessed as not eligible for Travel Assistance, the Council will not be obliged to re-assess the individual for the remainder of that academic year, unless the place of residence or education changes, except where an appeal is lodged in line with the appeals procedure.

**All Travel Assistance offered is subject to annual review, in line with Education Funding Agency Guidelines, and it is at the discretion of the Council.**

## Appeals and Complaints

### What is the difference between an appeal and a complaint?

Complaints arise when you are unhappy about something, for example, you may feel you have not been dealt with properly or in a professional manner, that information given to you was incorrect or that there has been an unacceptable delay. For these sorts of issues, please follow the Complaints Procedure (link provided in section below).

With an appeal, you may be perfectly happy with the way that you have been treated but feel that the wrong decision has been made and would like it re-examined. For these issues, please follow the Appeals Procedure.

### Complaints Procedure

The Council is committed to ensuring that the Travel Assistance provided is appropriate to the needs of the young person, is of a high quality and meets required safety standards.

Complaints about the provision of Travel Assistance will be investigated in accordance with the Council's Complaints Policy. This does not apply to complaints about a refusal to grant transport, which will be dealt with through the Transport Appeals procedure.

The complaints policy can be found at:

➤ <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-compliments/>

### Appeal Procedures

The law states that as a parent/carer, it is your responsibility to get your child/young person to school/college. Only in a small number of cases does the Council have to provide help. Most Wokingham students are not eligible for free school transport.

There is strict eligibility criteria set out in national law and the Council's Post-16 Travel Assistance Statement. If you believe the transport policy has not been applied correctly, then you may ask for the decision to be reviewed. You must contact us in writing within 20 days of receiving your initial outcome.

### Stage 1 – Review of decision

You will need to clearly state the specific parts of the policy which you believe have not been applied correctly and include or attach any relevant information to support your case.

The decision will be reviewed within 20 working days and you will receive a detailed written notification of the outcome of the review.

### **How to make a Stage 1 Appeal**

Before starting an appeal, please read our full guidance on the Council website: [\*\*Travel Assistance Appeals and Complaints\*\*](#)

### **Stage 2 - Appeals Panel**

If you remain unhappy with the decision made at Stage 1, you will have 20 working days from the receipt of the Council's decision to make a request to escalate the matter to Stage 2 appeal.

Within 40 working days of receipt of your request, an independent appeals panel will consider written and/or verbal representations from both the parent/carer and officers involved in the case and will give a written notification of the outcome within 5 working days.

No member of the appeal panel will have been involved in the original decision to decline Travel Assistance.

It is outside of the School Transport Appeals Panel's role to review the Policy itself. The Panel is also unable to consider school admission matters. If you decide to submit a Stage 2 Appeal, we ask that you clearly explain why you believe that the reasons for refusing your Stage One Appeal (provided within the Stage 1 Appeal Review outcome letter) do not comply with the Council's Travel Assistance Policy.