WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Your guide to Personal Transport Budgets

Flexible travel assistance for eligible children and young people

Parent and Carer Guide

1. Introduction

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) is one way the Council can support eligible children and young people with travel to school or college. It gives families funding to arrange safe and reliable journeys in a way that works for them. How a PTB is offered depends on the child or young person's age:

- For children aged 5 to 16, a PTB may be offered where they qualify under the School Travel Assistance Policy, it is suitable, offers best value and the parent or carer agrees.
- For young people entering post-16 education who qualify under the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement, a PTB is the Council's standard travel assistance offer.

This guide explains how PTBs work. It should be read alongside the policy that applies to your child or young person: The School Travel Assistance Policy for children aged 5 to 16, or the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for learners continuing in education after Year 11.

Important Being eligible for travel assistance does not always mean a PTB will be offered. For children aged 5 to 16, the Council will consider the child's needs, the journey, value for money and whether the family agrees. For post-16 learners, a PTB is the standard offer, but another arrangement may be considered where evidence clearly demonstrates that a PTB would not safely or reasonably meet assessed needs or the family circumstances. All arrangements are reviewed in line with the relevant policy.

A PTB gives you flexibility to choose arrangements that work for your family. The arrangements must help the child or young person travel to and from school or college, be safe and lawful, and support regular attendance.

2. 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
- 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

3. Ways to use your PTB

You can use the PTB in any way you wish, for example:

- You or someone in your family can drive your child to and from school.
- You can arrange with a friend or relative to cycle with or walk your child to school.
- Car share with other parents.
- Pay for a bus pass for your child or get a bus pass for a friend to go with your child
- You could pay for a place on a vehicle that the school organises, to take children to and from their school.
- You could pay for childcare for another child for you to take your eligible child to school.
- Work with the school to join up with other parents
- Use it towards the cost of a taxi or share the cost of the taxi with other parents

If you pay someone using your PTB, it is your responsibility to make sure you meet any legal obligations. This may include requirements relating to tax, National Insurance, employment, insurance, and health and safety.

We also recommend arranging a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before employing someone.

If you arrange and pay for a service, such as an after-school club or transport provider, the agreement is between you and that provider. You are responsible for checking and following its payment, notice, and cancellation terms.

Before agreeing to anything, make sure you understand the terms and what you will be responsible for. You can seek independent legal advice if you are unsure.

You will:

- have control over how the payment is used that allows you to get your child to school/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 Council Organised Transport services.
- 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.

Applying for a PTB

An application for a PTB can be made by:

- the parent, guardian, or carer on behalf of the child.
- a nominated person acting on behalf of the applicant if agreed by the applicant and that nominated person has capacity.

Calculation of the PTB amount

The way a PTB is calculated depends on the child or young person's age and circumstances. For eligible children aged 5 to 16 attending a mainstream school, the payment is based on 45p per mile. For eligible children aged 5 to 16 with special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems, the payment is based on 70p per mile. For post-16 learners, the payment is determined by the straight-line distance from the home address to the school or college. The Council will confirm the calculation and payment amount in writing.

Children aged 5 to 16 attending a mainstream school who do not have SEND, a disability or mobility problems

For this guide, a mainstream school is a local authority-maintained school or academy that is not a special school, Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) or alternative provision setting. If your child is eligible for travel assistance, does not have an EHCP and attends a mainstream school, their PTB will be calculated at 45p per mile for the agreed journeys between home and school.

Children aged 5 to 16 with special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems

If your child is eligible for travel assistance because their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems mean they cannot reasonably walk or use public transport, even when accompanied where appropriate, their PTB will be calculated at 70p per mile for the agreed journeys between home and school. Having an EHCP or a diagnosed condition does not automatically make a child eligible.

Young people in post-16 education

For an eligible post-16 student, the PTB amount is based on the Council's straight-line measurement from the home address to the school or college. The one-way distance places the journey into one of the three payment bands shown below. The published annual amounts are based on a maximum of 190 attendance days and will be adjusted on a pro-rata basis where the young person attends fewer days, starts part-way through the academic year or is not required to attend on particular days.

The post-16 payment bands are:

Band	One-way straight-line distance	Annual PTB for five-day attendance
1	Up to 5 miles	£2,000
2	5 to 10 miles	£3,000
3	Over 10 miles	£5,000

Payment of PTB

The annual PTB will be calculated using the appropriate calculations as set out above, and will be split into three payments, paid termly.

Retrospective payments will not be made. The Council will not reimburse parents or carers for transport costs incurred before travel assistance has been formally approved. Any agreed support will start from the date confirmed by the Council, and families remain responsible for travel arrangements and costs before that date.

When to apply

Apply as soon as your child or young person's school or college place is confirmed. This gives the Council time to assess the application and, if it is approved, arrange suitable travel assistance.

Children aged 5 to 16

Apply as soon as you know which school your child will be attending and the school place has been confirmed. For children starting a new school in September, applications submitted by 31 May give the Council the best opportunity to have approved travel assistance in place for the start of the autumn term; arrangements cannot be guaranteed by September for applications received after this date. If your child moves home or changes school or setting during the academic year, apply as soon as the new place is confirmed. The application will be assessed as soon as possible.

Post-16 Students

Travel assistance does not continue automatically from one academic year to the next. All post-16 learners receiving a Personal Transport Budget or Council-organised transport must reapply each year. The current arrangement ends on 31 July, and a new application must be approved before assistance can continue for the next academic year.

Apply as soon as the school or college place is confirmed and no later than 31 May. Applications received after 31 May will still be considered, but travel assistance may not be in place for the start of the autumn term. Applications made after September will be processed as soon as possible, but no start date can be guaranteed.

How payments are calculated

A PTB is a contribution towards the cost of arranging transport. It is not intended or guaranteed to cover all costs, and families are responsible for any costs above the amount awarded. **All annual PTB calculations are based on a maximum of 190 attendance days. If the child or young person attends fewer days, starts part-way through the academic year or is not required to attend on particular days, the Council will calculate or adjust the payment on a pro-rata basis.**

Your payment schedule

Each termly payment is initially based on the days when the child or young person is expected to attend the school or college site. The Council will then review attendance. Any days they did not attend, including study leave or other authorised or unauthorised absence, will be deducted from the next termly payment because transport was not required. This may mean the total payment is lower than the published annual amount.

Each year, the Council will send you a schedule showing the expected termly payments, based on the days the child or young person is expected to attend and their timetable. You must tell the Council within 14 days if the schedule is incorrect. If you do not, it may not be possible to correct an underpayment later.

Other journeys

Travel assistance is not provided for work experience or additional journeys requested by the school or college.

Change of circumstances

Tell the Council immediately, in writing or by email, about any change that could affect your eligibility for travel assistance or the amount of your PTB. This includes:

- Moving home or changing school, college or site.
- A timetable change that affects attendance days or school or college hours.
- An absence lasting five consecutive school or college days or more.

If you do not report a change and the Council later decides that it would have reduced or ended the payment, the Council may stop the PTB and recover any amount that should not have been paid.

If you are unsure whether a change could affect your PTB, contact the Council for advice.

If a change means that your child or young person is no longer eligible for travel assistance, PTB payments will stop.

Review of PTB arrangements

The Council will review PTB arrangements regularly to check that they remain suitable. As part of a review, it may check attendance records and confirm that the child or young person is able to access their education. Send any attendance information requested to ctu.group@wokingham.gov.uk.

When the review is complete, the Council will tell you in writing if the PTB will be adjusted, suspended or ended.

When a PTB may be reviewed or changed

The Council may review, adjust, suspend or end a PTB where:

- Attendance falls below 90% in a term.
- The child or young person regularly arrives late.
- The child or young person arrives in a condition that affects their ability to learn.
- The travel arrangements funded by the PTB are unsuitable or unsafe.
- The child or young person has short-break stays away from the family home.
- National legislation or Council policy changes.
- More than one eligible child or household member attends the same school or college, or another nearby setting, and the journeys can reasonably be combined.

Ending a PTB agreement

You can cancel the PTB at any time by telling the Council in writing. Alternative travel assistance may not be available immediately and may not be available until the start of the next term.

You must tell anyone you have employed or contracted using the PTB. If the Council ends the PTB, it will explain the decision in writing and give the notice required by the relevant policy.

If an application is unsuccessful

If your child or young person is not eligible for a PTB, you may be able to buy **a spare seat** on an existing Council main school bus route, subject to availability.

For post-16 learners, ask the school, college or sixth form whether a bursary or other financial support is available. If you believe the travel assistance decision is wrong, you can ask for it to be reviewed through the relevant appeals procedure.

Independent Travel Training (ITT)

Independent Travel Training (ITT) helps children and young people build the skills and confidence to travel as independently as possible. It supports preparation for adulthood and, where appropriate, future employment. If the Council considers that a child or young person may benefit, it may contact the family to discuss an assessment.

The assessment will be completed with input from the family and, where appropriate, the school. It will consider whether a one-to-one ITT programme is suitable, including:

The assessment will take account of:

- Likely eligibility for travel assistance under the relevant policy.
- Current independent travel skills.
- Age and level of maturity.
- Distance between home and the education setting.
- Special educational needs or disabilities and any support required.
- The route the child or young person would need to travel.
- Public transport journey times and the complexity of the route.
- How often the journeys are required.

The assessment takes place before training begins. A programme is personalised to the child or young person and will usually last around 8 to 12 weeks. During training, a dedicated trainer supports the agreed journeys and helps the learner build the skills needed to travel safely and confidently.

While the child or young person is taking part in ITT, the programme will be their travel assistance offer. At the end of the programme, the Council will review progress with the family. If independent travel is not appropriate, the Council will review what other travel assistance may be suitable.

Many children and young people benefit from learning to travel independently. However, ITT will not be suitable for everyone, particularly where the nature of their SEND means they could not travel safely and independently.

Review of eligibility

If an application is unsuccessful, the Council will not normally reassess it during the same academic year unless there is a relevant change, such as a new home address, a different education setting or new evidence that could affect eligibility. You can also use the appeals procedure if you disagree with the decision.

Annual review

Travel assistance is reviewed under the policy that applies to the child or young person. For children aged 5 to 16, the Council will review whether they remain eligible and whether the assistance is still suitable. Post-16 assistance ends on 31 July each year and does not continue automatically; families must reapply for the next academic year.

Appeals and Complaints

The Council aims to provide travel assistance that is safe, suitable and appropriate to the child or young person's assessed needs.

Complaints

Use the Council's complaints procedure if you are unhappy with the service you received, for example because of a delay, incorrect information or the way you were treated. A complaint is not the correct route for challenging a decision to refuse travel assistance or the type of assistance offered; use the appeals procedure for those matters.

Find the Council's Complaints Policy at:

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

Appeals

You can appeal if you disagree with a decision to refuse travel assistance or believe the assistance offered is unsuitable. The appeal may be made by a parent, guardian or carer, or by the young person where appropriate.

Find information about the appeals process at:

www.wokingham.gov.uk/school-transport-appeals

Frequently asked questions

Q. Would I receive the PTB until my child finishes at the school they attend?

A. A PTB is not guaranteed for the whole time your child or young person attends the same school or college. For children aged 5 to 16, the Council will review whether they remain eligible and whether the arrangement is still suitable. Post-16 travel assistance ends on 31 July each year and does not continue automatically; families must reapply for the next academic year.

A review may consider continuing eligibility, the suitability and safety of the arrangements, attendance and whether the PTB continues to support access to education. The Council will confirm any decision to adjust, suspend or end the PTB in writing.

Q. Would I receive a PTB for my child to attend two schools?

A. Not usually. Travel assistance is normally provided for the child's main school or college. If a child attends more than one setting, the Council will consider the circumstances under the relevant policy. Where a school arranges temporary or alternative provision while the child remains on its roll, travel to that provision will normally be a matter for the school and family to discuss.

Q. When will my PTB start and can earlier travel costs be reimbursed?

A. A PTB starts from the date confirmed by the Council after travel assistance has been approved. Payments cannot be backdated, and the Council will not reimburse travel costs incurred before the confirmed start date. You remain responsible for arranging and funding travel until the PTB begins.

Q. When and how will the PTB be paid?

A. The annual PTB is divided into three termly payments. The Council will provide a payment schedule showing the expected amounts. Payments may be adjusted to reflect the child or young person's actual attendance, their timetable, their start date and the number of journeys required.

Q. Will the payments be taxed?

A. A PTB must be used to support safe and lawful travel to and from school or college. Tax treatment can depend on individual circumstances. If you are unsure whether receiving or using a PTB could affect your tax position, contact HM Revenue and Customs or seek independent tax advice.

Q. If I have two or more children with an EHCP, all of whom are eligible for transport assistance, can I claim a PTB for each child?

A. Each child's eligibility and travel needs will be assessed individually. However, where more than one eligible child or household member attends the same school or college, or another nearby setting, the Council will normally make one PTB payment to the household where the same travel arrangements can reasonably meet their needs.

Q. Both my child and I are happy with the current contractor and driver that transport my child to and from school. If I applied for the PTB, could my child continue to travel on the same vehicle?

A. No. If you accept a PTB, you become responsible for arranging the child or young person's travel. The PTB cannot be used to buy a place on Council-organised transport. You may approach the same operator privately, but any new agreement would be between you and the operator. It would be separate from the Council's contract, subject to the operator's agreement and availability, and you would be responsible for the cost and terms.

Q. What happens if I am paid too much?

A. Tell the Council as soon as possible and do not spend the additional amount. The Council may adjust a future payment or ask you to repay money that you were not entitled to receive, including where a relevant change was not reported promptly.

Q. Do I need to collect any receipts for petrol etc.?

A. You do not normally need to submit petrol receipts with each payment. However, you should keep enough information to show that the PTB is being used for safe, lawful travel to and from school or college. The Council may ask for information as part of a review.

Q. What happens if my child is ill?

A. Tell the Council if an absence lasts five consecutive school or college days or more. Where fewer journeys are required, the following term's payment may be reduced. The Council will consider attendance and the reasons for absence before deciding whether the PTB needs to be adjusted, suspended or ended. For post-16 learners, attendance below 90% in a term may trigger a review; it does not automatically end the PTB.

Q. My child is a boarder. Would this affect the amount I receive for my PTB?

A. Yes. The payment will reflect the journeys your family is expected to arrange. For a child aged 5 to 16, the Council will confirm the PTB amount for the agreed journeys under the School Travel

Assistance Policy. For a post-16 learner, the relevant distance band will be adjusted to reflect the attendance pattern and number of required journeys.

For example, a family arranging weekly journeys would receive a higher payment than a family arranging journeys only at the beginning and end of each term.

Q. What should I do if we move home or my child changes school, college or site?

A. Tell the Council immediately and provide the new details. The change may affect eligibility, the PTB amount or whether the existing arrangement remains suitable. The Council will reassess the travel assistance and confirm the outcome in writing. Do not assume that the existing PTB will automatically continue or be recalculated.

Q. I have one child that receives transport because of their EHCP and another that is currently going through the assessment process. Would I receive a PTB for each child?

A. You can apply for each child who needs travel assistance, but each application will be assessed against the eligibility criteria in the relevant policy. An EHCP does not automatically make a child eligible. If both children are eligible and their journeys can reasonably be combined, the Council will normally make one PTB payment to the household.

Q. I am a foster carer for a child that receives transport, can I apply for a PTB?

A. A foster carer can apply where the child is the responsibility of Wokingham Borough Council and meets the travel assistance eligibility criteria. An EHCP does not create an automatic entitlement. The child's Social Care team should also be involved because any support linked to the care placement may form part of the wider care package.

If the child is looked after by another local authority, contact the child's social worker or that authority's Social Care team in the first instance. As the child's corporate parent, that authority should consider any travel needs as part of the child's care and education arrangements and coordinate with the relevant school transport team where necessary.

Q. Do I need to apply again each year?

A. For children aged 5 to 16, the Council will review whether they remain eligible and whether the PTB is still suitable. For post-16 learners, travel assistance ends on 31 July and a new application must be made for each academic year. Apply as soon as the next school or college place is confirmed and no later than 31 May where possible.

Q. Can I use my PTB to pay for a space on the transport services provided by the Council?

A. No. A PTB cannot be used to buy a place on Council-organised transport. It must be used for arrangements that help the child or young person travel safely and lawfully to and from school or college.

Q. If I apply and am granted a PTB but find that at a later date it doesn't work with my child or my circumstances change, can I change back to the previous transport arrangement?

A. Tell the Council in writing as soon as possible if the PTB no longer works for your child or your circumstances change. You can cancel the PTB, but Council-organised transport will not restart automatically and may not be available immediately. The Council will consider whether another form of travel assistance is appropriate under the relevant policy.

Q. What should I do if the money provided by the PTB is not enough for the arrangements I wish to make?

A. Before accepting a PTB, consider whether the amount offered will allow you to make safe and reliable arrangements. The Council will confirm how the payment has been calculated. A PTB is a contribution towards travel costs and is not intended or guaranteed to cover the full cost of the arrangements you choose, including a door-to-door taxi.

If the arrangements you choose cost more than the PTB offered, you will normally be responsible for the difference. If you believe the proposed assistance is unsuitable, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed in line with the relevant appeals procedure.