

HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY

HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

Children and Young People between 5 and 16 years of age

¹Please refer to the Council's Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy for further information regarding travel assistance for students 16+

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Contents

Section 1: Introduction	4
1.1 Travel Assistance - definition.....	4
1.2 Principles, Roles & Responsibilities	5
1.3 General Policy Statement.....	6
1.4 Equality Statement	7
1.5 Safeguarding.....	7
1.6 Implementation and Monitoring of the Policy.....	8
1.7 Legal Framework	8
1.7.1 Statutory Requirements	8
1.7.2 Local Application of Statutory Duty.....	9
Section 2: Is my child eligible for travel assistance?	10
2.1 Question 1 – Does your child attend their nearest ‘Qualifying School’?.....	10
2.1.1 What are qualifying schools?	10
2.2 Question 2 – What is the walking distance from your child’s home to school?.....	11
2.3 Question 3 - Does your child have any special educational needs or disabilities, which limit their mobility or ability to use public transport?.....	12
2.4 Question 4 - Is the child from a low income family?	13
2.5 Question 5 – Are there other circumstances relating to your child and family that need to be taken into consideration?.....	14
2.5.1 Temporary medical conditions.....	14
2.5.2 Children with disabled parents.....	14
2.5.3 SEND Children in Care	14
2.5.4 Individual circumstances	14
Section 3: Assessing Your Application	16
3.1 Application Assessment.....	16
3.2 Travel Assistance Provision Exclusions	16
3.3 Multiple Home Addresses	17
3.4 Review of Provision & Eligibility	17
3.5 Passenger Assistants	17
Section 4: Forms of Travel Assistance Offered	19
4.1 Range of Travel Options Considered	19
4.2 Transport for London (TfL) Travel Pass/Oyster Card	19
4.3 Independent Travel Training	20
4.4 Personal Transport Budget.....	21

4.5	Collection Points.....	22
4.6	Arranged Transport	22
4.7	Emergency Procedures.....	23
Section 5 : How to apply for travel assistance		24
5.1	Complete an Application Form.....	24
5.2	Notification of decision	24
5.3	Formal Appeal Process	24
5.4	Complaints.....	25
Appendix 1 - Decision Matrix for SEN Travel Assistance Applications for Primary School Aged Children `		26
Appendix 2 - Decision Matrix for SEN Travel Assistance Applications for Secondary School Aged Children		27
Appendix 3 - Travel Assistance Code of Conduct		28
	What parents/carers can expect from the London Borough of Hillingdon Home to School Transport Providers:.....	28
	What parents/carers can do to help transport to run smoothly.....	29
Appendix 4 - Travel Assistance Review / Appeals Process		30

Section 1: Introduction

This policy sets out how, and under which circumstances, the London Borough of Hillingdon (the Council) will provide transport to children of compulsory school age between home (or a group pick up location) and school. It specifically relates to transport between home (or a group pick up location) and school at the start and end of the school day and outlines the responsibilities that parents/carers, children/young people and the Council have in this process. Travel Assistance is provided from the child's home address to their educational establishment and back to the home address. Hillingdon has adopted two key principles which underpin a culture of providing travel assistance:

- **promoting independence**
- **maintaining quality of life**

By working in partnership with parents, children and young people, schools and the voluntary sector, Hillingdon aims to secure the right option for each child so they are better prepared to enter adulthood confidently as active participants in society. This policy explains the way in which the Council may help with the transport needs of those children/young people who qualify for assistance as a result of specific special educational needs, disability or other mobility difficulties. For the avoidance of doubt, references to 'special educational needs / disabilities' include both the physical and behavioural needs of students.

1.1 Travel Assistance - definition

The term 'Travel Assistance' refers to the various different means of transport that are available to support eligible pupils in Hillingdon. Examples include:

- Free travel on buses for children under the age of 18 and in full time education
<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel>
- Personal Transport Budgets
[Personal budgets – Hillingdon Council](#)
- Independent Travel Training
- Motorised transport provided by the Council

Hillingdon Council recognises the importance of extending the range of transport options available so that the most suitable arrangements can be made to support individual needs whilst promoting independence.

Local authorities only have a duty to provide free travel assistance where there are no

suitable arrangements relating to travel between the child(ren)'s home and school provided free of charge by any other means (for example Transport for London). In that regard, it is expected the availability of free bus travel within Greater London will meet educational travelling needs in most cases. This means that even if the child is eligible for travel assistance, including the low-income criteria, their needs are likely to be met through access to free public transport.

In each case the Council will consider whether the provision of free public transport is suitable for the purpose of facilitating the child's attendance at school, including whether there may be exceptional circumstances where additional travel costs may arise due to travel outside the scope of the free pass (e.g. rail or underground or non-Transport for London bus travel).

In order to determine eligibility for travel assistance, all applications must be made in accordance with the requirements set out in this policy and will be assessed on an individual basis against the various criteria.

1.2 Principles, Roles & Responsibilities

The Council is committed to providing free home to school transport in order to meet its statutory obligations. In so doing the Council will:

- provide equitable, safe, efficient and cost-effective transport for pupils entitled to transport in accordance with the Council's duties and powers as provided for in legislation;
- ensure information is made accessible for parents/carers so that they are aware of their entitlement;
- regularly review eligibility for transport to ensure that those who are receiving transport remain eligible;
- monitor the take-up of services to ensure that access is fair and equitable;
- support sustainable modes of travel to school. As well as helping to boost children's fitness and concentration levels, walking and cycling helps to reduce the congestion caused by the journey to school, together with the associated accidents, pollution and carbon emissions.

The Hillingdon Passenger Services Department is specifically responsible for:

-administering this and any other policies, determined by the Council, which govern eligibility for travel assistance;

-determining eligibility and identifying the transport needs of individual pupils;

- commissioning all home to school transport;
- managing the overall budget for home to school travel assistance;
- planning and securing the most appropriate and cost effective home to school transport;
- day to day management of all home to school transport provision;
- establishment of operating standards;
- contract management and compliance with operating standards and policy objectives;
- management of the Council's in-house passenger transport fleet as required.

1.3 General Policy Statement

This statement sets out the way in which the Council exercises its powers and duties to provide home to school travel assistance in accordance with the relevant and appropriate legislation.

The Council will provide free travel assistance for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at their nearest suitable (qualifying) school and live more than the statutory walking distance from it, i.e. two miles for children aged under the age of eight and three miles for children aged eight and over. The Council makes no general transport provision for children under the age of compulsory education, or for children of any age who attend private schools or colleges except in the case where a private (independent) school is named in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). If a child is registered at more than one qualifying schools (which are not Pupil Referral Units) the Council will provide travel assistance to whichever school the child is attending on any school day. In all cases where the EHC plan deals specifically with transport the EHC plan will triumph over this policy should the two conflict.

The nearest suitable school includes the Council's designated catchment area school or, if closer than the designated catchment area school, the nearest qualifying school that is deemed by the Council as suitable to a particular child's age and need requirements. In all cases the distance to the school must exceed the statutory walking distance.

In all other circumstances the Council will not usually provide free travel assistance or contribute towards the cost of transport.

The above statements are intended as a general guide and are without prejudice to the full policy set out below. A parent/carer may appeal against a transport decision through the Council's formal Appeals Process.

1.4 Equality Statement

The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in respect of the following characteristics: age / disability / gender reassignment / marriage and civil partnership / pregnancy and maternity / race / religion or belief / sex / sexual orientation This policy is subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. This assessment will be integral to all future policy and guidance reviews.

1.5 Safeguarding

The Council and its partners recognise that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. Whether their interest is in all young people 'staying safe' in all aspects of our services, or whether they are working in specific areas of vulnerability all staff, including drivers and passenger assistants will have appropriate training and induction so that they understand their roles and responsibilities and are confident in carrying them out. Schools, settings, children, young people and their parents/carers or any member of the community should feel secure that they can raise any issues or concerns about the safety or welfare of children and know that they will be listened to and be taken seriously.

This will be achieved by maintaining an ethos of commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It is supported by a clear Child Protection policy, appropriate induction and training as well as briefings and refreshed learning to ensure compliance with current legislation and guidelines.

The Council acts as a Corporate Parent for Children in Care. This means that the Council has a legal duty to provide the kind of support that any good parent/carer would provide his or her own child. This policy has been written in line with these principles.

Roles & Responsibilities of Parents/Carers (see Appendix 3)

It is the responsibility of a child's parent/carer to:

- ensure the reasonable safety of themselves and their child(ren) between home and the designated pick up point, and from the designated drop-off point and home;
- understand the provisions within the home to school travel assistance policy;
- make necessary arrangements for attendance at an appropriate school or other setting, including submitting applications as necessary for admission and for travel assistance to the Council;
- to make arrangements, when not available themselves, for their child to be accompanied by a responsible person as necessary when walking to and from school

or to and from a pick up point who will wait with the child until the vehicle arrives;

-to be at the home address / group pick up bus stop at agreed times for collection / drop off of students

-ensure the child knows what to do if for any reason the vehicle does not arrive: for example, this could be returning home, going to a neighbour or telephoning the parent/carer for assistance;

-notify Hillingdon Passenger Services of any change of address or telephone number in good time. The Council will not be responsible for any interruption of service provided to a child or any other consequential difficulty from not having an up-to-date address or operational telephone number;

-provide evidence of personal circumstances in support of any application or appeal for travel assistance;

-submit any appeal to the Council.

-sign and return a copy of the Parent/Carer Travel Assistance Agreement.

1.6 Implementation and Monitoring of the Policy

Hillingdon Passenger Services will be responsible for the implementation of this policy through the development of internal processes designed to ensure the ability to monitor service delivery and regular reviews for those in receipt of the service. Data managed by the Passenger Services team will be reviewed and monitored within the Disability Service on a regular basis.

1.7 Legal Framework

1.7.1 Statutory Requirements

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. However, under the Education Act 1996 and the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Council has a duty to provide assistance with travel to and from qualifying establishments for children and young people aged 5 - 16 in certain circumstances.

In addition, the Council also has a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances. Other post 16 learners with special educational needs and disabilities aged 16-25 attending colleges and other places of learning may also be eligible for assistance (please see Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy). There is no mandatory entitlement to travel assistance for children under the age of 5.

Under s508A of the Education Act 1996, the Council must produce annually a strategy on

sustainable modes of travel for children and persons of sixth form age travelling to and from their places of education.

The strategy is intended to improve the physical well-being of those who use the “sustainable modes of travel” and/or the environmental well-being of Hillingdon.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Council must provide such travel arrangements as are considered necessary to get every “eligible child” to their “relevant educational establishment”. Travel arrangements for an eligible child must under s508B be free of charge and may not require participants to incur extra costs. The Council may also choose to provide travel assistance to those who do not qualify as eligible children but these arrangements may include a requirement under s508C for the child or their parent/s to pay some or all of the costs.

1.7.2 Local Application of Statutory Duty

The provision of travel assistance by Hillingdon Council will be based on individual needs and circumstances and with regard to the efficient use of resources.

Section 2: Is my child eligible for travel assistance?

Each application will be assessed on its own merit, reviewing the specific individual needs of the child against this policy. It is therefore important that families provide all the information and evidence requested during the application process.

When making a decision about your child's eligibility to travel assistance the Council will ask the following questions which are explained more fully in the sections that follow:

1. Does your child attend their nearest 'Qualifying School'?
2. What is the walking distance from the child's home to school?
3. Does your child have any special educational needs or disabilities, which limit their mobility or ability to use public transport?
4. Is the child from a low income family?
5. Are there other exceptional circumstances relating to your child and family that need to be taken into consideration?

2.1 Question 1 – Does your child attend their nearest 'Qualifying School'?

2.1.1 What are qualifying schools?

- community, foundation or voluntary schools;
- community or foundation special schools;
- non-maintained special schools;
- pupil referral units;
- maintained nursery schools; or
- academies including free schools, city technology colleges (CTC), city colleges for the technology of the arts (CCTA) and university technical colleges (UTC)
- Independent schools approved under S41 of the C&F Act 2014 to provide for children with SEN

The 'nearest qualifying school' means the nearest school with places available that provides the appropriate education for the age, ability and aptitude of your child taking into account any special educational needs that your child may have.

Admissions and travel assistance are separate matters and acceptance at a school does not necessarily entitle a child or young person to travel assistance.

For non-SEND children, you are free to name any school you wish during the admission process, the child will only be eligible for free transport where the school selected is the nearest appropriate to the home address and all of the eligibility criteria are met.

Any issue about whether there is a nearer suitable school which the child or young person could attend will normally be determined by reference to the availability of that school during the normal admissions round.

For children or young people with SEND the nearest appropriate 'qualifying school' will be named on their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

If, because of parental preference, a pupil with an EHCP secures a place in a school which is further away from an alternative school deemed suitable by the Council to meet needs then the Council will not provide travel assistance to the more distant school.

Summary

If a child or young person does not attend their nearest qualifying school, the Council will not be obliged to offer any form of travel assistance

2.2 Question 2 – What is the walking distance from your child’s home to school?

The ‘statutory walking distance’ criteria is defined in the 2024 Home to school travel and transport guidance, published by the DfE, as:

- Over 2 miles if the child is aged between 5 and 8 years old, or
- Over 3 miles if the child is 8 years old or older

Using the Council’s transport mapping system, we will measure the shortest walking route which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety when calculating the walking distance. As such the route measured may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

If your child lives further from school than the statutory walking distance, the Council is obliged to offer assistance with travel. Where a child is able to use public transport, it is expected travel assistance provision will take the form of a Transport for London (TfL) Zip Oyster Card (See Section 4: Forms of Travel Assistance Offered).

Consideration of walking Distance for Children with special educational needs and disabilities

In some circumstances a child or young person with SEND may not meet the distance criteria but are unable to walk to school because of their needs. Where this is identified through the assessment process then travel assistance will be offered.

The form of travel assistance offered will be influenced by the needs of the child determined through the assessment process, the distance between the home and school, and the transport routes available.

Summary

- *Children who live within the ‘statutory walking distance’ will not receive Council travel assistance, except where they have a special educational need or disability which significantly affects their mobility, or there are circumstances presented that require support from the Council*
- *In most cases, travel assistance for those who live outside the ‘statutory walking distance’ but who do not have a special educational need or disability will take the form of a Transport for London Zip Oyster Card (See Forms of Travel Assistance below)*
- *For children with a special educational need or disability, travel assistance will be offered based on an assessment of the individual’s mobility, but the distance from home to school may influence the type of travel assistance offered*

Summary

If a child or young person does not attend their nearest qualifying school, the Council will not be obliged to offer any form of travel assistance

2.3 Question 3 - Does your child have any special educational needs or disabilities, which limit their mobility or ability to use public transport?

You have a legal responsibility to ensure that your children attend school regularly, regardless of their special educational needs or disabilities. Wherever possible, the council expects you to plan arrangements for your child to attend school in the same way as parents and carers of pupils without an EHCP, as this is important in developing the child's independence, social and life skills.

Travel assistance for children with an EHCP will be offered based on the needs of the child. In exceptional circumstances children who do not have an EHCP but have medical needs may also be eligible for transport, this is explained further in question 5.

How is eligibility assessed and how are forms of travel assistance chosen?

London Borough of Hillingdon's Passenger Services department will assess whether your child is eligible for travel assistance in accordance with this policy. If your child is deemed eligible for some form of travel assistance, the Council will decide which form is most suitable measured against the principles of promoting independence and maintaining quality of life. The decision will be based on careful consideration of the following:

- whether your child would have considerable difficulty in walking or using public transport (accompanied as necessary) due to their special educational needs or disability
- whether your child has a physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport, or suitable public transport is not conveniently available – for example wheelchair users, students who require specialist seating, harnesses, head restraints or other specialist facilities
- whether your child has emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community.
- the distance and complexity of the journey to and from school, and the public transport routes potentially available
- whether your child would be vulnerable and at risk of danger to themselves or the general public if they use public or other transport (accompanied as necessary)
- whether your child would be able to travel independently to school if suitably travel trained and supported

The Council will then decide which form of travel assistance to offer and will reflect the considerations previously mentioned which are illustrated in the following 'Decision-Making Flowchart' (Appendices 1 & 2).

Other considerations: residential schools

For entitled children aged 5 - 16 with special educational needs and disabilities who attend residential schools, their travel assistance offer will reflect their type of placement. If your child's placement is not one of those below it will be assessed as an exception to policy.

Termly boarding - Travel assistance will only be provided at the beginning and end of each term and the beginning and end of each half term and at other official school closures

Weekly boarding – Travel assistance will be provided to and from school at the beginning and end of the academic week and at other official school closures

If the Council has agreed that a child requires a residential placement, travel assistance options will be reviewed on a case by case basis in order to consider the most appropriate and cost effective modes of transport.

Summary

- *you have a legal responsibility to ensure that your child attends school regularly, regardless of the child's SEND*
- *travel assistance for children with an EHCP will be offered based on the needs of the child*
- *if your child is deemed eligible for some form of travel assistance, the Council will decide which form is most suitable based on the following:*
 - child's ability to walking and/or use public transport (accompanied as necessary)*
 - any physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport*
 - if your child has any emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community.*
 - the distance and complexity of the journey to and from school*
 - whether your child would be able to travel independently to school if suitably travel trained and supported*

2.4 Question 4 - Is the child from a low income family?

Families with a low-income background are assessed differently. Your child will be assessed under low income criteria if they are entitled to receive free school meals or you are in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment Support Allowance (income related)
- Child Tax Credit with income less than £16190 (unless Working Tax Credit is claimed)
- Support under Part VI of Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit

2.5 Question 5 – Are there other circumstances relating to your child and family that need to be taken into consideration?

Each application is assessed based on the individual circumstances presented to the Council. In exceptional circumstances, examples of which are listed below, the Council may provide transport even when other eligibility criteria are not met -

2.5.1 Temporary medical conditions

We will consider an application for travel assistance for your child if they have a temporary medical need, even if you live within the statutory walking distance.

You will need to provide written evidence from an appropriate medical practitioner confirming that your child has specialist transport requirements which cannot be met by public transport (accompanied or unaccompanied) or a vehicle available for use by the family.

Any assistance offered will be reviewed at regular intervals, and when your child's medical need no longer requires the council support, then travel assistance arrangements will stop. We will expect you to have exhausted all other travel options before applying for travel assistance.

2.5.2 Children with disabled parents

If you have a disability that prevents you from walking with your child to school, the local authority may provide travel assistance to support your child even if they live within the statutory walking distance. However, if you are in receipt of transport assistance as part of your disability living allowance (DLA) then we will expect this to be adequate provision. In exceptional circumstances assistance may be offered.

2.5.3 SEND Children in Care

Travel support may be available for children in care, to ensure their care arrangements are supported by appropriate home to school travel arrangements. The child's care plan sets out how a child will be cared for and how their needs will be met, this includes home to school travel arrangements.

2.5.4 Individual circumstances

Parent/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. This may include making or assisting with travel arrangements to and from school and/or accompanying your child. If your work or family arrangements conflict with your child's travel to and from school, this will not normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance. Parents/carers who work are advised to:

- Look for breakfast or after school clubs so drop off and pick up times fit in with working hours
- Use alternative care options available, such as a child minder or personal assistant
- Take up the statutory right to flexible working hours. More advice can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>

Summary

The Council may consider an application for travel assistance for your child if:

- *they have a temporary medical need, even if you live within the statutory walking distance*
- *you have a disability that prevents you from walking with your child to school*
- *they are a child in care (this will be detailed in the child's care plan)*
- *your work or family arrangements will not normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance. You have a statutory right to flexible working hours, find out more at <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>*

Section 3: Assessing Your Application

3.1 Application Assessment

The Passenger Services Department will assess your application. The team aims to let you know the outcome of their assessment within 20 working days of the date they receive your application. In circumstances where additional information is required from other professionals then the assessment process may exceed 20 working days. If your application is successful, then consideration will be given as to what type of travel assistance will be offered.

Travel assistance will reflect your child's needs and circumstances and will be selected from the range of options available. Factors that will influence what travel assistance will be offered include:

- the principles of promoting independence and maintaining quality of life
- the needs of the child / young person and ability to complete travel training both at the time of application and in the future (e.g. the assessor and family might decide a child is too young, but agree that it is a possibility in the future and to revisit in a few years)
- the distance from home to school
- public transport route
- whether there is already transport going to the school
- the most cost-effective mode of travel assistance

3.2 Travel Assistance Provision Exclusions

The purpose of travel assistance is to support children accessing their education for the start and end of the standard school day only. Travel assistance will not be available for any of the following unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so:

- hospital, medical, or dental appointments;
- children taken ill during the school day;
- schools where parent/carers are making their own arrangements;
- travel to and from pre/post school clubs and other extra-curricular activities;
- schools which are not the nearest school able to meet the needs of the pupil.
- travel to and from work experience
- Denominational, selective or single sex schools (unless nearest qualifying school)

In addition to the above, we will not be able to accommodate any preference in terms of collection/drop off times. Travel assistance will be planned using the most efficient route available to maximise the use of resources available to the Council whilst ensuring journey times are not longer than necessary for any of the children it provides support for.

3.3 Multiple Home Addresses

When assessing your application, the Council will use your child's 'main residence' for assessment purposes. Where a child has two home addresses then provision will only be provided from their 'main residence'.

'Main residence' will be considered as being the address at which your child is registered whilst attending school, with their GP, and, if applicable, the address of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit or child tax credits.

3.4 Review of Provision & Eligibility

Where travel assistance is approved and provided, the Council will review travel arrangements on at least an annual basis; and will reassess eligibility when the child / young person reaches the end of each educational key stage, transitions to a new school and / or if personal circumstances change.

This will help ensure that travel assistance arrangements continue to meet your child's needs as well as helping them move towards greater independence for adulthood. Travel assistance will be discussed at your child's Annual Review if they have an EHCP and the SEND Department consulted throughout.

Between reassessments, travel assistance arrangements will stay in place unless:

- assistance has been agreed for a limited period
- the child changes school
- the child moves home during an academic year
- the child's needs change significantly

We will endeavour to keep change to a minimum but where a change is required, we will inform you with as much notice as possible.

If your child changes school (including school site) or their home address changes then travel arrangements will be cancelled from the date the child moves home/school. For travel arrangements to be reinstated you will need to reapply and be reassessed. Travel assistance will only be provided if the child continues to meet the eligibility criteria.

3.5 Passenger Assistants

There is no statutory entitlement to a passenger assistant on any route. Any provision of passenger assistants will be based on the individual needs of each passenger and where the use of a passenger assistant will mitigate high levels of risk.

If after assessment the Council identify that a child/young person does not require the support of a passenger assistant then one will not be provided.

A passenger assistant may be used when there are a number of children with significant and complex needs who are travelling on the same vehicle. This will require a separate assessment and will be reviewed on a regular basis to establish if the continued provision of a passenger assistant is required.

Passenger assistants will administer emergency rescue medication. Emergency services will also be called if a pupil has a medical emergency whilst on the vehicle.

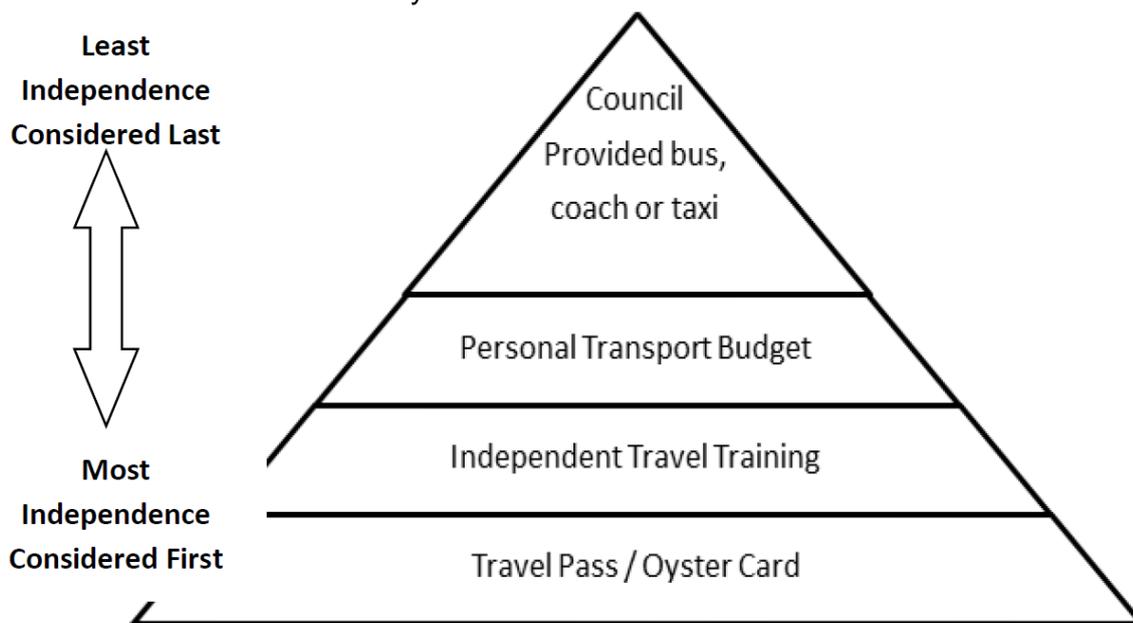
Section 4: Forms of Travel Assistance Offered

4.1 Range of Travel Options Considered

The parent / carer is responsible for ensuring their child attends school, the full Code of Conduct is set out in Appendix 3

If it is decided that the Council will assist the parent/carer in taking their child to and from school, a range of options will be considered. The type of travel assistance offered will reflect the evidence and information provided to ensure their needs are supported accordingly.

To support your child's needs and assist their move towards independence for adulthood the Council will explore travel options that offer the greatest level of independence to your child based on their needs. All pupils should be encouraged to use independent options as these help children / young people to develop life skills and often support a healthy lifestyle by including walking as part of the journey. The following travel options will be considered, please note that this list is not exhaustive and other forms of travel assistance may also be offered:



4.2 Transport for London (TfL) Travel Pass/Oyster Card

If your child can use and access public transport (accompanied as necessary) then the Council will expect the current travel assistance offer from TfL to be appropriate for your child. The current offer allows free travel on buses and trams for children of school age up until the end of the academic year in which they turn 16. This means that most children attending school will not require any further support from the council for travel arrangements, including those who have an EHC Plan.

For further information and details about how to apply go to the Transport for London website (<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/>) your local underground station or post office. In some circumstances, the Council will agree to provide a travel card that allows travel on the London Underground and London Overground trains in addition to bus and tram travel.

4.3 Independent Travel Training

To support children to travel independently, the Council may offer independent travel training as their travel assistance offer. The training will support your child to be taught the necessary skills that will allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport.

The benefits of this travel option for the family and young person are:

- increased independence, confidence and personal mobility
- increased access to education opportunities at colleges and universities, local services and leisure activities
- reduced reliance on family members to provide on-going travel to current and future activities and services
- improvement in life skills, such as handling money, personal and road safety skills
- increased opportunity to gain employment and further education

A trainer will travel and work with your child to ensure the following aspects of the training are understood and put in to practice independently:

- timetables (including time management)
- orientation
- road safety
- accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets)
- communication
- personal safety (including what-if scenarios)
- travel preparation

If Passenger Services Transport Officers identify through either the assessment process or Annual Reviews that your child may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training programme then they will arrange for the travel training provider to conduct an assessment to decide if training is a suitable option for your child now or in the future.

If the outcome of the assessment identifies that your child is not suitable for independent travel training at that time then an alternative offer of travel assistance will be made by the Council. If in the future, your child is able to benefit from the training then arrangements will be made to begin training at the earliest opportunity.

The assessment is required to identify if travel training would be appropriate for your child. Travelling independently is a key life skill, and the Council would like to offer the opportunity to participate to as many children and young people as possible. The Council will assess your child following travel training.

Training programmes last a maximum of 12 weeks and your child will only complete the training once both the trainer and you agree that your child has reached their independent travel goals and can agree a future route to school which maximises their independence. The Council is responsible to safeguard travel trainees at all times and ensure measures are in place to mitigate intentional and unintentional absconsion.

4.4 Personal Transport Budget

Compulsory age children eligible for travel assistance may be offered a personal transport budget if appropriate to both your family and the Council.

The benefits of this travel option are as follows:

- you can make your own arrangements to best suit the needs of your child
- you can organise travel arrangements to fit around work commitments and other siblings
- the type of travel arrangements organised can take any form that you deem appropriate. (Examples of options include using the family car, paying a carer to support the child to and from school, paying for a bus/train pass so you can travel on public transport with your child to school and pool payments with another family to make joint travel arrangements)
- you are in control of arrangements and can make changes at any time rather than other more restrictive travel options
- you can organise travel arrangements to allow your child to attend after school clubs or activities in the community

You can request this as an option by contacting Passenger Services. This option may be of interest to you if:

- you wanted to take your child to school but needed support to make it financially viable for you
- your child has very complex needs and you wanted to make your own travel arrangements
- you wanted to combine the council's contribution with your personal finances to provide your child with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with your family circumstances

If you were offered this form of travel assistance, it would be your responsibility to ensure travel arrangements allow your child to:

- travel safely
- attend school regularly and on time
- be ready to learn once they arrive at school

The value of a personal transport budget offered will be based on pre-determined mileage bands. Further information can be found at [Personal budgets – Hillingdon Council](#). Personal transport budgets will be paid to your bank account during term time only in advance of any travel taking place. Attendance levels will be monitored and money will be reclaimed for non-attendance at school or any mis-use of funds.

4.5 Collection Points

Passenger Services may identify that the appropriate form of travel assistance for your child is by means of a collection/drop off point, usually using TfL bus stops.

The Council uses collection points to support the development of independence and preparation for adulthood. You can request that your child is collected from any of the stops on the allocated route, not necessarily the one closest to your home address; this is designed to help parents with more than one child at different schools.

If your child is accessing a collection point you will be responsible for ensuring that your child gets safely to and from the collection point at the appropriate time. If your child's travel assistance offer requires them to walk to a collection point, then it is expected that an adult will accompany them where necessary. You will also be responsible for your child when they are waiting for transport, and when they leave the transport at the end of the day.

In the event of an emergency, late running of the service, or an adult not being present at a collection point, children will be taken to an agreed safe point for collection.

4.6 Arranged Transport

If all other options have been explored and identified as not suitable, such as public transport, independent travel training or personal independence budgets then the Council may consider providing a vehicle to transport your child to and from school.

Normally, arranged transport is planned to collect many children from home into the same school. You should be aware that as children join or leave the school collection times may change. Times are not fixed and may change throughout the year because of the mid-year pupil changes at the school.

Where possible and appropriate, vehicles may collect children attending different schools for an effective use of resources.

All staff on vehicles are DBS checked and trained. Staff will be provided by a qualified, registered transport provider, working to contractual standards set by the Council, via Council-contracted staff agencies or directly employed London Borough of Hillingdon staff.

As a general guide, the Council aim for a child of primary school age not to be in transit for more than 45 minutes and a secondary school child for not more than 75 minutes although this is not always possible.

4.7 Emergency Procedures

In the unlikely event of a transport service failure, it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that students are still able to attend their regular educational placement, should it be unaffected by said emergency. Such incidents are managed on an individual basis; the Council will communicate directly with schools and parents/carers regarding any changes to regular transport provision.

Section 5 : How to apply for travel assistance

5.1 Complete an Application Form

If you believe your child may be entitled to travel assistance you should complete an Assistance Request Form, which can be found on the Council's website:

[Travel Assistance Application - Hillingdon Council](#)

PLEASE NOTE IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU ALSO COMPLETE A NEEDS PROFILE FOR YOUR CHILD AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION

5.2 Notification of decision

All applications will receive careful consideration. The Council will aim to inform you of the local authority's decision in writing within four weeks receipt of the completed application.

5.3 Formal Appeal Process

Where an application for school travel support has been refused or the type of provision offered is felt unsuitable the following process will apply -

Stage 1 – Review

You should submit your review request in writing via email within 20 working days of the original notification of decision. Requests for reviews must be sent by email to travelassistance@hillingdon.gov.uk

Your request for review must detail all the options explored and considered by the family to make their own travel arrangements, and why these options are not suitable/available. New information/evidence not included in the original application must also be provided. This should support the circumstances and reasons why you feel travel assistance should be provided, and where possible this information/evidence should be from relevant professionals and should clearly identify how specific needs/circumstances mean that travel assistance is required.

The decision will then be reviewed by the Senior Transport Officer in the Passenger Services department. You will receive a decision within 20 working days from the date of receipt of the request for a Stage 1 Appeal.

Stage 2 – Appeal

You have 20 working days to challenge the review decision. The Stage 2 Appeal will be reviewed by a panel within 40 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 Appeal. You should submit your appeal with supporting evidence along with the stage 1 decision to travelassistance@hillingdon.gov.uk. You will be invited to present to the panel which will consider the evidence in line with this policy. This decision will be sent by letter within 5 working days.

During each stage of the appeal process the reviewing officers/panel will use the evidence available to them to review the previous decision and whether the policy has been applied correctly. When you submit additional information for consideration it may be helpful to consider providing any of the following:

- details of how your child currently travels around outside of school
- examples of incidents/concerns as a result of the Council's original decision
- supporting medical evidence from a consultant
- what efforts have been made by family and friends to support your child with his/her travel assistance and attendance at school
- evidence that alternative travel options have been explored, along with evidence why they are not considered suitable

The appeal process is separate from any complaints or concerns that you wish to raise around the quality of the service that you and/or your child receives.

The appeals process is illustrated in the diagram in Appendix 4

5.4 Complaints

If you have a complaint regarding the application process, please follow the Council's Complaints Procedure. Details can be found on the Council website as follows:
www.hillingdon.gov.uk/complaints

If you are not happy with the final response from the Council, you can then ask the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) to further investigate the complaint. The LGO is responsible for conducting investigations of complaints about service failure and maladministration that cannot be resolved by the Council. Any complaint must be in writing and addressed to the LGO at PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH. They can also be contacted by telephone on 0300 061 0614.

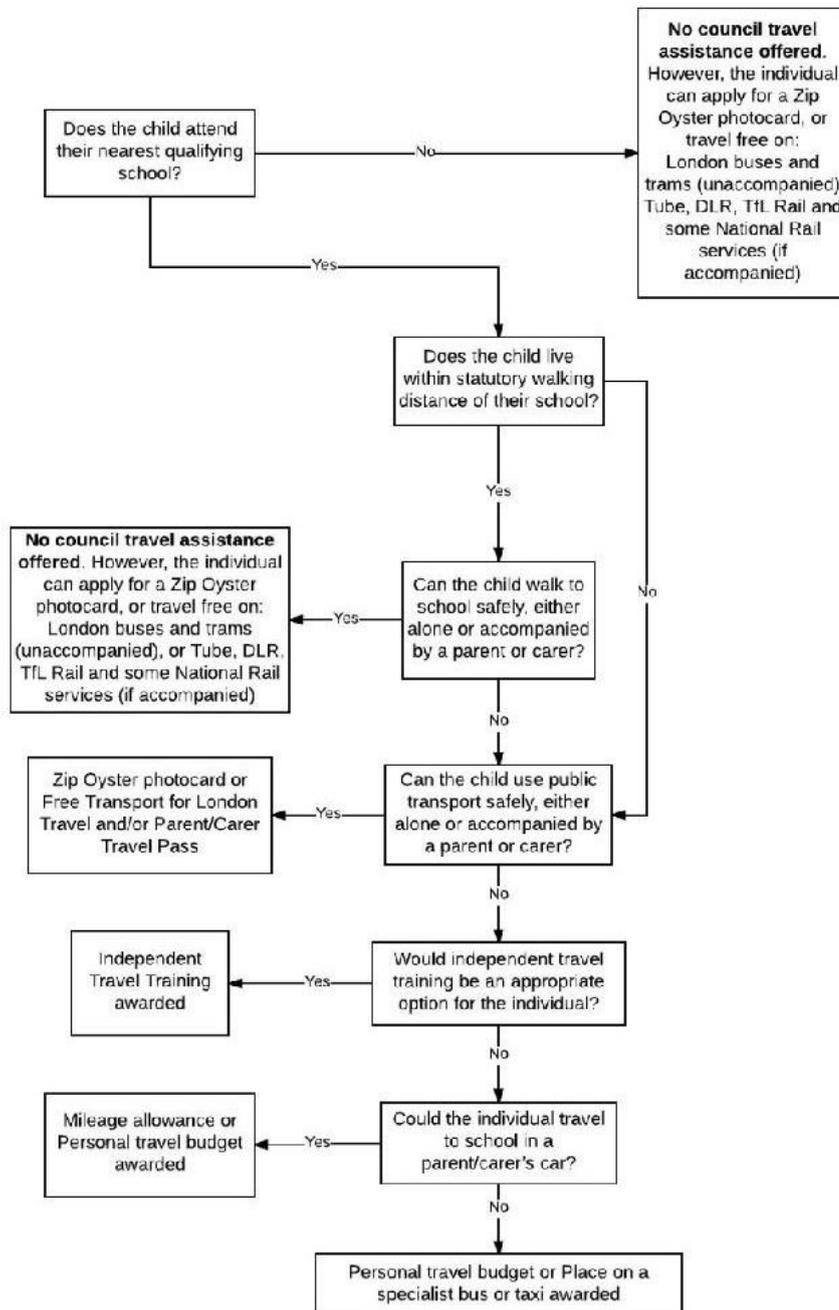
Contact

London Borough of Hillingdon Passenger Services
Harlington Road Depot
128 Harlington Road
Uxbridge
UB8 3EU

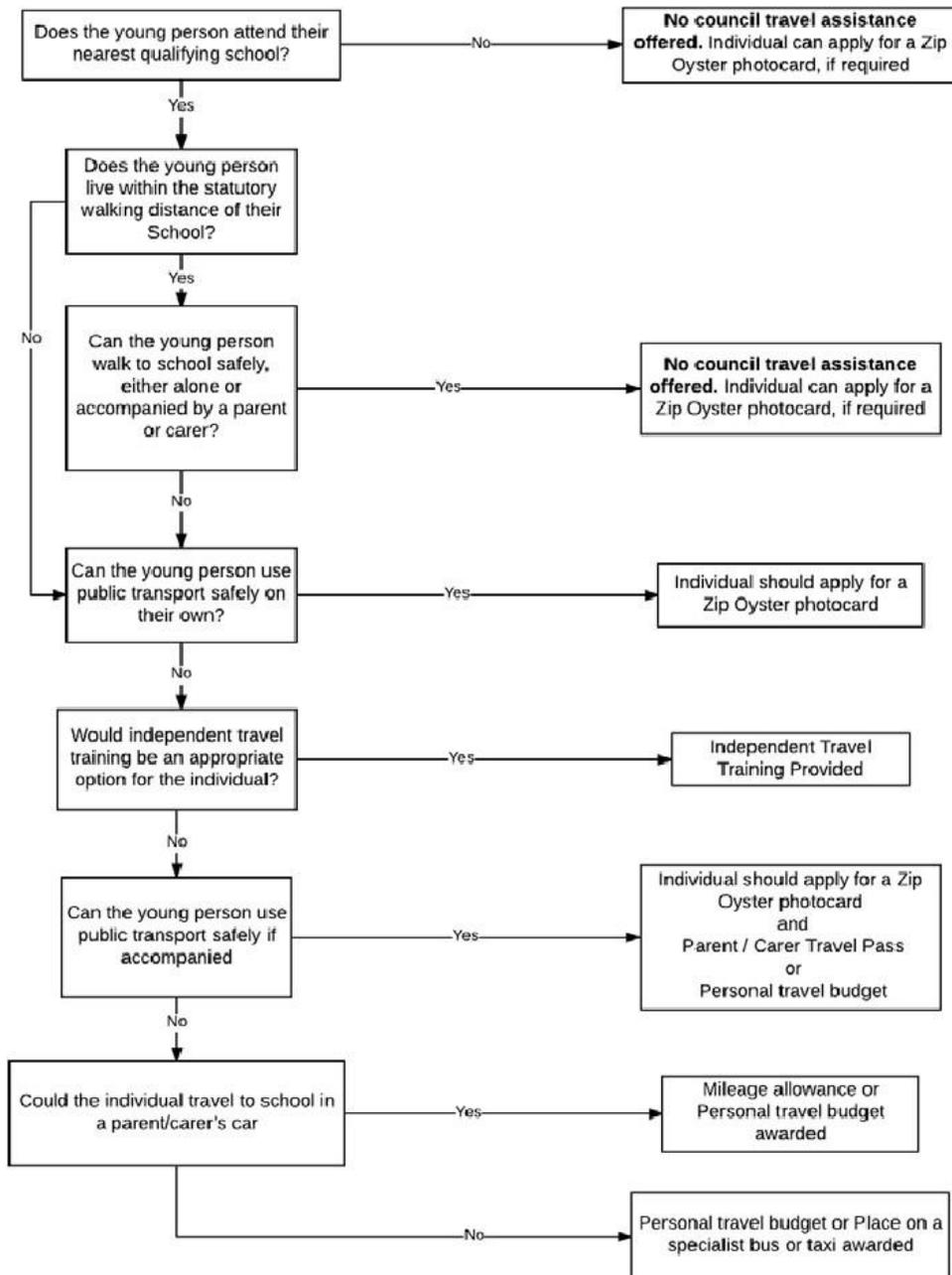
travelassistance@hillingdon.gov.uk

01895 250008

Appendix 1 - Decision Matrix for SEN Travel Assistance Applications for Primary School Aged Children



Appendix 2 - Decision Matrix for SEN Travel Assistance Applications for Secondary School Aged Children



Appendix 3 - Travel Assistance Code of Conduct

What parents/carers can expect from the London Borough of Hillingdon Home to School Transport Providers:

All drivers/passenger assistants will:

- wear identification badges
- wear high visibility clothing at all times whilst on school sites
- have an enhanced DBS check
- have received suitable passenger assistance training
- have a reasonable grasp of the English language
- have read and understood the needs profile of each passenger
- be presentable and have a clean appearance
- treat students/parents/carers in a respectful and courteous manner
- The vehicle provided will be fit for purpose and the company will make a replacement vehicle available should this be required
- The vehicle provided is always operated to a high standard of cleanliness
- All seats in vehicles have a working seatbelt, and passenger restraints and wheelchair securing devices are provided as required
- Drivers/passenger assistants are fully trained in operating any ancillary equipment fitted to a vehicle e.g. tail lift, wheelchair securing equipment, passenger harnesses etc.
- Drivers will provide a high standard of driving
- Drivers/passenger assistants are aware of their duties and responsibilities, particularly in the event of an emergency
- Drivers/passenger assistants will not smoke during the performance of the contract
- Upon arrival at the agreed collection or drop off time, drivers will wait for up to five minutes
- Drivers/passenger assistants keep parents/carers informed of any significant delay to transport
- Transport companies will notify the SEN Transport Team on 01895 250008 of any incident or accident affecting the students
- Transport companies will try and avoid, where possible, changes in drivers/passenger assistants although this cannot be guaranteed

What parents/carers can do to help transport to run smoothly:

- Ensure that your child is ready five minutes before the company is due to arrive.
- Drivers are only able to wait for a maximum of five minutes after the agreed pick up time for each student. However, drivers should not be made to wait for five minutes on a regular basis because if waiting is repeated along the route, all students will be late for school. If a vehicle arrives on time but your child is not ready or is not ready after the five minutes waiting time, transport to school becomes the responsibility of the parents/carers.
- Take your child to the vehicle (the driver/passenger assistant is not expected to escort them from the house to the vehicle).
- Be at home or collection point in time to receive your child on their return from school. If there is no responsible adult at home to meet your child (this person must be named on your application form as a parent/carer or emergency contact). In such cases, it may be necessary for transport officers to contact other agencies (e.g. London Borough of Hillingdon Children Social Care or the Police).
- Inform the transport company/driver/passenger assistant as soon as possible if your child is not attending school for any reason (e.g. illness). In addition, it is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of any absence.
- Inform the transport team on 01895 250008 if you need to collect your child from school during the day (e.g. to take him/her to a medical appointment).
- Ensure the passenger assistant/driver is aware of anything affecting your child on a particular day.
- Notify us of any problems with the transport so that these can be addressed in a timely and appropriate way.
- Ensure your child does not take personal belongings on the vehicle as the local authority can take no responsibility for loss or stolen items whilst travelling.
- Provide us (via the Needs Profile form) with the name, telephone number and relationship to your child of at least one adult who can take responsibility for your child in an emergency if you are not available.
- Inform us of any changes that might affect the transport arrangements, including but not limited to: changes to your address; changes to your contact details or those of your emergency contact(s); allergies or medication (please note that drivers and passenger assistants are not authorised to administer medication or undertake any form of medical intervention) or if your child is getting a new wheelchair.
- Ensure, where possible, your child is aware of appropriate behaviour whilst travelling to and from school and the possible repercussion of continued bad behaviour (please see below).

Please Note

If you become aware that there is bad behaviour or bullying on your child's vehicle please report the matter to the School Transport team by ringing 01895 250008 who will investigate. The contractor will speak to the driver, and the school should interview the pupils involved and also any witnesses. They will then report back to the Transport team who will take the appropriate action.

Appendix 4 - Travel Assistance Review / Appeals Process

