



Home-to-School Travel Assistance Policy

2026 - 2027

(Including SEND and Post-16)

Introduction

The information given in this policy relates to 2026 - 2027. It sets out the Council's obligations to provide Home-to-School travel assistance to eligible children living in the city.

When considering whether to assist with Home-to-School travel assistance, Local Authorities are under a statutory duty to have regard to the Education Act 1996 and Schedule 35B of the Act which was inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Sections 508B and 508C of the Act make provision for local authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. The City Council has developed its Travel Assistance Policy in accordance with this legislation and equalities legislation to ensure it is able to meet its statutory duty.

The Department for Education has also issued "Home-to-School Travel and Transport Guidance: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities July 2014". This was updated in January 2024. This Policy reflects and complies with the statutory guidance provided in the 'Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25 years' document, last updated 12 Sept 2024.

It is important that parents understand the criteria for travel assistance before taking the time to make an application.

If, in light of the eligibility criteria set out in this booklet, you think it is unlikely your child is eligible to receive free travel assistance, Section 8 of this booklet provides you with information regarding some other options that may be available to help your child to attend school.

If you have applied previously for free home-to-school travel assistance which has not been awarded, you may apply again if your circumstances have changed, i.e., your child has changed schools, moved address or because the needs of the child have changed.

If your circumstances have changed because of a medical condition or disability, you will need to supply evidence from the relevant medical professional. Contact the appropriate team for advice.

- For a child or young person attending a mainstream school please contact the All-Age Transport Team - schooltransport@stoke.gov.uk
- For child or young person with an Education, Health, and Care Plan, please contact the All-Age Transport Team - transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk

Contact details will be found at the back of this booklet.

It is strongly recommended that all parents read this guidance carefully along with the information on our website; go to stoke.gov.uk and search for "Home-to-School Travel Assistance."

Local Authority Responsibilities	Your Responsibilities
• To consider all information provided when making an assessment to notify you of the decision and explain how we have reached that decision. • To answer questions, you have about travel assistance in plain language avoiding acronyms and jargon where possible. • To provide any travel assistance agreed to the time and schedule agreed. • To give as much notice as possible of any changes needed to the travel assistance provided. • Periodically to check the ongoing eligibility of travel assistance through contacting parents and schools.	• To provide as much up to date and accurate information as possible to support the assessment of your child's travel needs. • To make sure that your child is ready for transport in the morning and an adult is there to meet them in the afternoon at the agreed times and location. • To ensure as much as possible your child understands expected behaviour on transport. • To let us know if your child is not using travel assistance (i.e., for holiday or period of sickness lasting more than a day or two). • To reapply for travel assistance if you are planning to move home or change schools.

		Page
Contents		4
Terms we use in this document and what they mean		6
1.0 Principles of Transport Provision		
1.1 The Law		7
1.2 Key Principles		8
2.0 General Eligibility Criteria for All Pupils (Inc. those with SEND)		
2.1 Who Qualifies		10
2.2 Who Does Not Qualify		10
2.3 The Nearest Appropriate School		10
2.4 Statutory Walking Distance		11
2.5 Children and Young People Living Outside Stoke-on-Trent		11
2.6 Denominational and Faith Transport		11
2.7 Families on Low Incomes		11
2.8 Children in Local Authority Care		12
2.9 What Travel Assistance May be Offered		13
2.10 Additional Journeys		13
2.11 Moving Home and Other Permanent Changes		13
2.12 Temporary Changes		14
2.13 Medical Conditions		14
2.14 Withdrawal of Transport on Health and Safety Grounds		14
2.15 Inaccurate Applications		15
3.0 Applying for Travel Assistance		
3.1 Age 5-16 Mainstream		16
3.2 Age 5-16 with SEND		16
3.3 Pre-school and Nursery with SEND		17
3.4 Post-16 and Young Adults 19-25 with SEND		17
4.0 Pupils with SEND		
4.1 Children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan		18
4.2 Passenger Assistants		19
4.3 Supporting Independent Travel		19
4.4 Parental Visits to Schools		20
4.5 Pre-school SEND Provision		20
4.6 Residential Schools		20
4.7 Annual Review		20
5.0 Post-16 and Young Adults 19-25		
5.1 Sixth Form / Higher Education (Mainstream)		22
5.2 Post-16 Pupils with SEND		22
5.3 Young Adults 19-25 with SEND		23
6.0 If Application Rejected		
6.1 Appeals		25
6.2 Complaints		26
7.0 Responsibilities		
7.1 Parents' Responsibilities		27
7.2 Parents Not at Home		28
7.3 Code of Conduct for Pupils Using Home-to-School Travel Assistance		28

8.0	Travel Assistance Provision	
8.1	Travel Assistance Options Explained	30
8.2	Other Ways to Get to School	30
9.0	Frequently Asked Questions	
9.1	FAQs	33
10.0	Supporting Information	
10.1	Summary of Provision	35
10.2	Process Flowchart	36
10.3	Personal Transport Budget (PTB) Rates	37
10.4	Useful Contacts	38

Terms we use in this document and what they mean

Parents: Throughout this document the term “parents” should be read to include foster parents, carers and other guardians of children and young people.

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Special School: as defined in CAFA Section 337 (as amended):

A school is a special school if it is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with SEND, and it is -

- (a) maintained by a Council,*
- (b) an Academy school, or*
- (c) a non-maintained special school.*

Mainstream School: as defined in Section 83 of Children and Families Act 2014 (CAFA):

“Mainstream school” means—

- (a) a maintained school that is not a special school, or*
- (b) an Academy school that is not a special school.*

Maintained School: An Educational institution funded (maintained) by the Local Authority.

Academy School: A school which is not maintained by the Local Authority and is registered as an independent school and is subject to a contract between the Academy trust (owner) and the Secretary of State.

Faith School: a school in the United Kingdom that teaches a general curriculum, but which has a particular religious character or formal links with a religious organisation.

Free School: (in England) a school set up by an organization or a group of individuals, funded by the government but not controlled by the Council.

EHCP: Education Health and Care Plan a document setting out the education, healthcare and social care needs of a young person (aged up to 25) and the outcomes they would like to achieve.

The Council: Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

SENMAS: (SEND Monitoring and Assessment). SENMAS manages the statutory assessment process, creates and reviews Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans for children aged 0–25, and monitors provision to ensure needs are met.

All-Age Transport Team: The All-Age Transport Team assesses home to school travel assistance applications for pupils across mainstream and special schools. The team also commissions, allocates and manages commissioned transport contracts on behalf of the Council. It also provides Independent Travel Training (ITT) for those pupils that may benefit from it.

SENDIASS: (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Support Service): SENDIASS provides confidential, impartial, free, high quality information, advice and support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND); children and young people with disabilities; and their parents.

1.0 Principles of Transport Provision

1.1 The Law

The law with regards to travel assistance is set out in the Education Act 1996 as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Sections 508B and 508C of the Act makes provision for local authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. The Council has developed its Travel Assistance Policy in accordance with this legislation and equalities legislation to ensure it is able to meet its statutory duty.

The Department for Education has also issued "Home-to-School Travel and Transport Guidance: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities July 2014" (Updated January 2024) to explain the law and to assist local authorities when they are making decisions.

Statutory Duty

It is parental responsibility to ensure that their child gets to and from school and to put in place the necessary travel arrangements. The Council has a general expectation that a child will be accompanied by a parent where necessary, unless there is a good reason why it is not reasonable to expect the parent to do so.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide suitable travel arrangements for eligible children when travel is not otherwise available. This statutory duty applies to eligible children of statutory school age, normally meaning age 5 to 16.

Eligible children are those who meet any one or more of the following criteria:

1. Live outside the statutory walking distance from home to school. **Statutory walking distance is 2 miles for children aged 5 - 7 and 3 miles for children aged 8 - 16.** Mileage is calculated using the Council's GIS system to calculate the home-to-school walking route.
2. could not reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their SEND needs, disability or mobility problem, even if even if they were accompanied by their parent/carer.
3. Live within walking distance but, having regard to the nature of the route, cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school, even if they were accompanied by their parent/carer.

There are also 'extended rights' to free travel to school for children from low-income households.

Extended Rights (Low Income Eligibility)

Travel assistance will be provided to children from low-income households. The definition of a low-income household is aligned with the definition used for **Targeted Free School Meals** in national guidance and is subject to change.

From September 2026, free school meals are available to all children in households receiving Universal Credit. However, eligibility for travel assistance under extended rights is based on families eligible for targeted free school meals, so not all children who receive free school meals will qualify for school travel assistance.

Currently, targeted free school meal eligibility applies to children in households receiving Universal Credit where annual income does not exceed £7,400.

Travel assistance will be provided to children who are entitled to targeted free school meals, where the child is:

- Aged 8 or over but under 11, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home; or
- Aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- Aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.

Where a child is eligible for extended rights to travel assistance, their eligibility will be reassessed before the beginning of each academic year. If a child ceases to be eligible for targeted free school meals during the academic year, we will continue to provide free travel to school for the remainder of the academic year.

Parents receiving the higher rate of the Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance and who are therefore entitled to a car for their child's use under the Motability Scheme will be considered under the same eligibility criteria and will normally be offered travel assistance via a mileage reimbursement in the first instance.

Discretionary Powers

Local authorities have discretionary powers to provide travel assistance for a child or young person who is not otherwise eligible. The authority reserves the right to request full or part payment of any reasonable travel expenses for children who have travel arrangements made under this discretionary power, i.e., outside the statutory duties. The Council does not offer vacant seats to non-entitled children and young people.

Parents of children who attend specialist nursery provision and are below statutory school age but over the age of 2 may apply for travel assistance. Each application will be assessed individually based on the child's specific circumstances and the Council reserves the right to charge towards the cost of any travel assistance provided.

1.2 Key Principles

1. In accordance with the Education Act 1996, local authorities will encourage and will promote sustainable travel options and will aim to improve the physical well-being of those who use them and/or the environment. To this end, priority will be given to the provision of training to enable independent travel, walking, cycling, public transport, and shared transport.
2. Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and for doing all that is reasonably practicable to bring about their child's attendance.
3. When exercising their duties and powers, the Council needs to take into account the suitability of transport as well as the efficient use of resources.
4. Travel assistance will be appropriate to the individual needs and circumstances of the child or young person and will encourage them to grow in confidence and independence wherever possible. It does not reflect the personal circumstances of the parent.
5. Parental contributions will be requested in some circumstances in support of non-statutory transport provision.

6. Children and young people who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or attend a special school do not automatically qualify for travel assistance.
7. Any travel assistance offered will be the most effective and efficient available.
8. It is the responsibility of the Council to decide how they will provide travel assistance.
9. Parents may be asked to support their child with home-to-school travel.
10. Each year, a child or young person's needs for travel assistance will be reviewed, and assistance may be amended or withdrawn if it is no longer required or a child or young person is no longer eligible.
11. Travel assistance only provides for one journey to and from school and must be used at the beginning and end of normal school hours. Travel assistance will not normally be provided at other times or on a flexible basis.
12. Travel assistance will not be provided for induction and settling-in days except where these occupy the same school hours as the rest of the school.
13. Where a child is allocated a pick-up point rather than a pick up from their home address, parents are responsible for ensuring their children get to and from any designated pick up and drop off point for the vehicle and remain responsible for them until they board the vehicle on their way to school or once they leave the vehicle at the end of their return journey. Once on school premises the school becomes responsible for the supervision of the child/young person.
14. The Council is unable to guarantee that pick up or drop off times will be compatible with any other arrangements made by parents.

2.0 General Eligibility Criteria for all pupils (including those with SEND)

2.1 Who Qualifies

Children and young people who meet statutory eligibility criteria defined above and who:

- are ordinarily resident in the City of Stoke-on-Trent; and
- are of statutory school age.

Students with SEND will also be eligible where their needs are such that they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to and from their place of learning. Parents who believe that their child may be entitled to travel assistance will need to complete an application form.

2.2 Who Does Not Qualify

1. Children under the age of 5 attending nursery or pre-school provision. Parents may apply under the discretionary powers provision, but travel assistance will only be offered in exceptional circumstances.
2. A young person aged 16 or over, whether attending school or another educational establishment. There is a separate policy for Post-16 & 19 students, which can be found in Section 5 of this document.
3. A child or young person living within the statutory walking distance from their school or college, except in exceptional circumstances, as determined by the Council. If a child or young person lives within the statutory walking distance from his/her school and is able to walk by a safe route, but needs to be accompanied on their journey, the child or young person's parent will normally be expected to accompany the child or young person.
4. A child or young person not attending their nearest appropriate school by parental choice. For children of both primary and secondary age groups, parents need to apply to the nearest school or have named the nearest school on their child's admissions application form to be considered for home-to-school travel assistance. If the nearest school is not named as a higher preference on the admissions form, the child will not be eligible for travel assistance.
5. A child or young person of any age attending an independent mainstream fee paying school.

The Council will not provide travel assistance so that parents can take siblings to different schools or go to work at a specific time, etc. For these reasons, parents are asked to make full use of extended school hours, breakfast clubs, and crèches.

2.3 The Nearest Appropriate School

The nearest appropriate school is the nearest geographical school which provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child or young person and any special educational needs the child or young person may have, and which has places available.

Appropriateness is assessed under two categories:

- Age appropriate, relating to attendance at a primary or secondary school; and
- Ability appropriateness, relating to attendance at a mainstream or special school.

Travel assistance will only be provided to the nearest appropriate school where it is more than the relevant distance from home for the age or abilities of the child.

If placement at the parents' preferred school is not compatible with efficient use of resources, i.e., there is an appropriate school closer to home than the preferred school, the Council may agree to place the child in the preferred school as long as parents provide or pay for home-to-school travel.

If parents have not been offered a place at any of their preferred schools and the Local Authority has offered a place at another school, parents may apply for travel assistance. Parents should remember that their child will not automatically get travel assistance to and from any school that offers them a place.

2.4 Statutory Walking Distance

Distances are measured by the shortest available walking route. This may take into account public footpaths where they are available. The shortest available walking route is one where a child or young person, accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult or parent, can walk safely. A route can only be considered hazardous, if it is hazardous for both an adult and child to walk together.

Statutory walking distance is defined as 2 miles to the age of 8 and 3 miles for children from the age of 8.

All distances between children's homes and schools are measured using the Authority's GIS system. In this way, all children are assessed consistently in the same way under the distance criterion.

Where upper distance limits apply, these are measured using the shortest vehicular road route, not walking routes.

Government guidelines state that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age should be 45 minutes. For secondary school children, the length of journey each way should ideally be no more than 75 minutes. A shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible, particularly where the school is outside the Authority area.

2.5 Children and Young People living outside of Stoke-on-Trent

If parents pay their council tax to a council other than Stoke-on-Trent City Council, they must apply to their own Local Authority (Council) for help with travel assistance even if their child is attending a Stoke-on-Trent school.

2.6 Denominational and Faith Transport

The Council ceased to provide free travel assistance to faith schools from September 2015, other than children and young people who qualify for this through the low income criteria described below.

2.7 Families on Low Incomes

Travel assistance will be provided to children from low-income households. The definition of a low-income household is aligned with the definition used for **Targeted Free School Meals** in national guidance and is subject to change.

From September 2026, free school meals are available to all children in households receiving Universal Credit. However, eligibility for travel assistance under extended rights is based on families eligible for targeted free school meals, so not all children who receive free school

meals will qualify for school travel assistance.

Currently, targeted free school meal eligibility applies to children in households receiving Universal Credit where annual income does not exceed £7,400. Travel assistance will be provided to children who are entitled to targeted free school meals, under the following criterion:

Children who attend a primary school and who are aged 8 years but less than 11 years, must also:

- attend their nearest appropriate school for transport purposes and;
- live between 2 - 6 miles from the school.

Children attending a secondary school and therefore aged 11 years and over, must also:

- attend one of their three nearest appropriate schools for transport purposes and;
- live between 2 - 6 miles from the school.

Primary and Secondary aged children, who are attending a faith school must in addition to receiving the benefits above;

- live between 2 - 15 miles from the school
- Be attending a faith school as expressly requested by their parents at time of admission, where that school is the nearest appropriate faith school based upon their religious beliefs.

Where a child is eligible for extended rights to travel assistance, their eligibility will be reassessed before the beginning of each academic year. If a child ceases to be eligible for targeted free school meals during the academic year, we will continue to provide free travel to school for the remainder of the academic year.

2.8 Children in Local Authority Care

A Looked After Child (LAC) is a child under the age of 18 who is in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, a local authority in accordance with section 22 of the Children Act 1989, including children accommodated under section 20 of that Act and those who are subject to a Care Order under section 31 of the Children Act 1989.

The Council also recognises the needs of previously looked after children, including children who immediately ceased to be looked after because they became subject to an Adoption Order (section 46 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002), a Child Arrangements Order (section 8 of the Children Act 1989), or a Special Guardianship Order (section 14A of the Children Act 1989).

It is recognised that for Children in Care, the stability of their educational provision is especially important. Each application for travel assistance will be considered on its own merits. However, Children looked after by Stoke-on-Trent City Council do not have an automatic entitlement to free home-to-school travel assistance and eligibility will be assessed in accordance with this Travel Assistance Policy and the Council's statutory duties under the Education Act 1996.

Where a child looked after by Stoke-on-Trent City Council is placed outside the authority's area, decisions regarding travel assistance will take account of the need to promote educational stability and comply with any applicable Department for Education guidance and inter-authority funding arrangements. Where required by legislation or statutory guidance, Stoke-on-Trent City Council will meet or reimburse any home to school transport costs arising

from the placement of Looked After Children in another local authority area. Any request for travel assistance must be referred to the All-Age Transport Team for consideration. Where transport costs are to be shared or reimbursed between local authorities, funding responsibility and cost-sharing arrangements must be agreed by all relevant parties prior to transport being commissioned or travel assistance commencing. No travel assistance will be authorised until such agreement has been confirmed.

2.9 What Travel Assistance May Be Offered

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has a duty under Section 508A of the Education Act 1996 to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport. This duty applies to all children and young people of compulsory school age (5 to 16) who travel to receive education or training in a Council's area.

The Council also has the responsibility to ensure the best use of resources on behalf of the residents and Council Taxpayers of the City.

The views of the young person and parents will be considered but the final decision on the type of travel assistance offered will be made by the Council. They will determine the mode of travel assistance that delivers the best value for money for Stoke-on-Trent taxpayers, taking into account any special arrangements needed to support the child's particular needs. Where this is different to the views of the parents or the young person an explanation for the choice will be given.

Parents may be asked to support their child with home-to-school travel, for example mileage rates or accompaniment on public transport.

The options explored will include, but are not limited to:

- a. A pass for a bus, train, or other commercially operated mode of transport;
- b. Independent Travel Training (See Section 8);
- c. A Local Authority minibus;
- d. A Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTB) agreement allowing parents' flexibility to provide travel assistance for their child;
- e. A commissioned bus service or shared taxi;
- f. Other forms of transport in the most exceptional cases.

2.10 Additional Journeys

Travel assistance is only provided from the child's home to the school at which they are on roll, at the beginning and end of each school day (unless dual provision is stated in the EHCP). If they attend another school or establishment that is arranged through their school as off-site provision, it will be the school and/or parents' responsibility to arrange travel to and from that school or establishment, for their off-site learning.

The child's home address will normally be the one at which they spend the most school nights, and any transport arrangements to or from an alternative address would be the responsibility of the parent to arrange. This includes arrangements for accessing childminders, grandparents, or other care arrangements before or after school.

2.11 Moving Home and Other Permanent Changes

If you move house, your child's entitlement to travel assistance will need to be reassessed. Parents must inform the All-Age Transport Team of the change as soon as possible. The

eligibility for travel assistance will be reassessed against the new address or the school in accordance with the City Council's Home to School Travel Assistance policy.

It will be parents' responsibility to make their own arrangements to transport their children to and from school until any new travel assistance is in place and confirmed.

If your child's school is not deemed as the nearest appropriate school to the new home, your child may not be eligible to receive travel assistance.

2.12 Temporary Changes

The Council will consider making special short-term amendments to travel assistance if there are exceptional circumstances. However, assistance will not be provided for the following:

- to enable a child or young person to attend an after-school activity or club;
- for a child or young person in a residential placement who, due to illness, is unable to use the scheduled transport;
- for a child or young person who is taken ill at school and needs to return home before the scheduled transport time;
- to enable a child or young person to attend dental, GP, or hospital appointments;
- for a child or young person who is unable to be collected from school at the scheduled time due to detention or exclusion;
- to or from a place of temporary residence.

The Council does not have responsibility to provide travel assistance for children and young people with SEND to and from respite care facilities but will work with families to agree reasonable arrangements that help them access short breaks at the end of a school day where this does not incur additional cost for the Authority.

2.13 Medical Conditions

To qualify for assistance on medical grounds, the child or young person must be attending their nearest appropriate school, and their medical problems must affect their ability to travel to and from school. Parents must provide the Council with evidence from the child or young person's consultant or other relevant medical professional to demonstrate the difficulties they have in walking or travelling on public transport in order to go to and from school, accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult or parent.

If travel assistance is granted on medical grounds, the child's case will be reviewed on a regular basis and up to date information on their medical condition will be required at each review.

2.14 Withdrawal of Travel Assistance on Health and Safety Grounds

The Council has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all children and young people for whom travel assistance is provided. We also have an obligation to ensure the health and safety of drivers and passenger assistants.

If a child or young person behaves in a manner that places the health and safety of those onboard a vehicle at serious risk, or presents a serious risk to themselves, this may result in travel assistance being withdrawn with immediate effect. If travel assistance is withdrawn on this basis, following all reasonable efforts, then it is the parents' responsibility to arrange travel for their child.

The parent will be informed of any incident that has occurred involving their child and they will be given an opportunity to make representations to the Council or appeal against the Council decision to withdraw travel assistance for their child. Details of how to appeal are in Section 6 of this policy.

The Council will work to find an alternative way for the child to get to school safely but, during this process, the parent of the child or young person will be responsible for making suitable arrangements to get the child or young person to school.

There is a Code of Conduct on page 28 of this document to help young people understand what is expected of them when travelling.

2.15 Inaccurate Applications

The Council reserves the right to reclaim the cost of any travel assistance provided, if it is found that any incorrect information has been provided to the Council in order to gain admission or travel assistance to a school that would otherwise be outside of the criteria.

3.0 Applying for Travel Assistance

3.1 Age 5-16 (Mainstream, not SEND)

1. All parents wishing to apply for travel assistance should first read the eligibility criteria in Section 2.
2. Parents who believe that their child may be entitled to travel assistance should visit the Council's school transport website for details on how to apply - www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport
3. Where parents apply for travel assistance to start in a new academic year, the application form, which is available from 1 March, needs to be submitted online as soon as possible. Where applications are received close to the beginning of the new academic year, whilst every effort will be made to put travel assistance in place for the first day of term, this cannot be guaranteed.
4. Parents must also include any other evidence required to support the application for home-to-school travel assistance as detailed in the application form.
5. Parents will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the application.
6. If parents disagree with the Council's decision not to provide travel assistance, they may appeal using the process outlined in Section 6. Whilst an appeal is in progress, parents are expected to transport their own child to and from school.

Until travel assistance is in place, it will be the parents' responsibility to make the necessary arrangements for their child to attend school.

3.2 Age 5-16 with SEND

1. All parents wishing to apply for travel assistance should first read the eligibility criteria in Section 2 and look at the additional information contained in Section 4.
2. Parents who believe that their child may be entitled to travel assistance should then complete the online application form at https://admissions.stoke.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en.
3. Where parents apply for travel assistance to start in a new academic year, the application form, which is available from 1 March, needs to be submitted as soon as the placement is confirmed with the educational establishment. Where applications are received close to the beginning of the new academic year, whilst every effort will be made to put travel assistance in place for the first day of term, this cannot be guaranteed.
4. Parents must also include any other evidence required to support the application for home-to-school travel assistance as detailed in the application form.
5. Parents should also attach any documentation that they feel may be beneficial to the Council when making a decision. It is assumed that a child would travel to and from school, accompanied as necessary by a parent or responsible adult.
6. If the child uses a wheelchair or buggy, or needs to carry equipment, such as oxygen, medication, walking aids, etc., the Council will need to know the details (including make and model of any wheelchair or buggy) to help assess the most appropriate form of travel assistance.
7. Parents will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the application. **Where Travel Assistance is agreed, the All-Age Transport Team will endeavour to have this allocated to eligible pupils within 4 weeks.**

8. If parents disagree with the Council's decision not to provide travel assistance, they may appeal using the process outlined in Section 6. Whilst an appeal is in progress, parents are expected to transport their own child to and from school.
9. Until travel assistance is in place, it will be the parents' responsibility to make the necessary arrangements for their child to attend school. The Council will not support any costs incurred during this processing period.

3.3 Pre-school and Nursery with SEND

Travel assistance for 3 and 4-year-old nursery age children attending nursery education provided by the Council is not a statutory provision. The Council does not have, and is not legally required to have, a policy or offer travel assistance to pupils who are below compulsory school age. This includes most children under the age of five who would not be due to start Reception during the 2026/2027 academic year. Travel Assistance will therefore only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

All applications will be assessed on an individual basis in accordance with the Council's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy. Any assistance granted would relate to the circumstances of the child, not the parent.

Where travel assistance is awarded for children below compulsory school age, families would have to pay a contribution. The charge to families for non-statutory use is therefore a contribution and does not cover the full cost of the travel assistance. The charge will be £1000 unless the family is in receipt of income related benefits, in which case a 50% discount will continue to apply, and the charge will be £500. In either case, the charge can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments. **Contributions need to be confirmed, and payment processes established by October half-term, or travel assistance will be withdrawn.** All children are entitled to free bus travel on public services up to the age of 5 years old, so long as they are accompanied by an adult. Parents are expected to accompany the child to nursery. Assistance with travel costs for the parents is not provided.

3.4 Post-16 Pupils and Young Adults 19-25 with SEND

1. All parents wishing to apply for travel assistance should first read the eligibility criteria in Section 5.
2. Parents who believe that their child may be entitled to travel assistance should then complete the online form at https://admissions.stoke.gov.uk/CitizenPortal_LIVE/en
3. Where parents apply for travel assistance to start in a new academic year, the application form needs to be submitted as soon as the placement is confirmed with the educational establishment. Where applications are received close to the start of the academic year, whilst every effort will be made to put travel assistance in place for the first day of term, this cannot always be guaranteed.
4. Parents must also include any other evidence required to support the application for home-to school travel assistance as detailed in the application form.
5. Parents will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing within 20 working days of receipt of the application.
6. If parents disagree with the Council's decision not to provide travel assistance, they may appeal using the process outlined in Section 6. Whilst an appeal is in progress, parents are expected to transport their own child to and from school.

4.0 Pupils with SEND

4.1 Children with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)

Transport can be a key factor in the support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

All children and young people, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) up to the age of 25, are subject to general Local Authority Transport criteria as described in Section 1 for primary and secondary mainstream children and young people. Travel assistance will additionally be provided for children and young people who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability. Eligibility for such children will be assessed on an individual basis.

This policy reflects and complies with the statutory guidance provided in the 'Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice 0 to 25 years' document, last updated 30 April 2020.

There is no guarantee that a child or young person who receives an Education, Health and Care Plan will receive home-to-school travel assistance. All children and young people will be assessed in accordance with the Council's Home-to-School Travel Assistance Policy, regardless of whether they hold an EHCP or not. Parents must therefore first read Section 2 to assess whether their child may be eligible for assistance.

Parents can also contact SENDIASS for support and assistance if they prefer. Contact details will be found towards the end of this document.

Travel assistance arrangements for young people with SEND may be more complex than those for mainstream pupils. As a general guide, travel assistance arrangements should not require a child to make multiple changes on public transport or result in an unreasonably long journey time.

Any information provided by parents, the school, other professionals who know the child and, when appropriate, the child as well will be taken into account.

The Team will consider:

- The age of the child or young person;
- Whether a walking route is appropriate;
- The nature and severity of the child or young person's SEND;
- Whether suitable public transport is available;
- Whether the child or young person may present a risk to drivers and other passengers;
- The most cost-effective mode of travel assistance for journeys to placements outside of Stoke-on-Trent.

The list is for guidance only, and satisfaction of one or more of the criteria does not automatically support entitlement to travel assistance.

Please be aware that Local Authorities are required to periodically re-tender all transport contracts, to ensure best value for money and efficient use of resources. Where children with

an EHCP are provided with travel assistance, no guarantee can be given that the arrangements, including any passenger assistant and driver, will stay the same throughout the child's attendance at school.

4.2 Passenger Assistants

A Passenger Assistant may be required to accompany some young people who require additional assistance. There is no minimum and maximum age that determines whether a Passenger Assistant is required.

Passenger Assistants will be provided when specified on the basis of needs. The needs of each individual child will be assessed to determine what support or supervision they will require.

Most children and young people will share vehicles with several others attending the same school or one nearby. In some instances, it will be appropriate to consider additional support having given consideration to the nature of the journey.

Where multiple children and young people with special needs are to be conveyed at the same time, consideration will be given to whether there is a need for one or more general Passenger Assistants to be provided to support the driver.

Passenger Assistants will be responsible for the care and supervision of the young people to and from school. They will oversee the child or young person's conduct and safety in such a way that the driver is unhindered in his/her duties. The role of the Passenger Assistant is to assist the driver in helping to ensure the passengers are transported in a safe and appropriate manner. All Passenger Assistants are subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring check (DBS).

Provision of a Passenger Assistant at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement and the requirement will be reviewed on a regular basis.

If a parent has concerns around a Passenger Assistant, please see the FAQ section at the end of this policy.

4.3 Supporting Independent Travel

As a child or young person becomes older, a move to a more independent method of travel is an important contribution to the development of life skills. The Council encourages a child or young person with an EHCP to develop independent travel skills where this is a reasonable expectation.

Independent Travel Training (ITT) provides tailored and practical help in travelling by public transport, on foot or by bicycle. ITT aims to help young people travel to their education setting independently and without fear.

The Council will also consider schemes where passenger assistants or "buddies" accompany a child or young person to school using public transport or walking, in order to support greater independence, social skills and to promote good health.

Independent Travel Training does not remove a child's legal eligibility or affect their entitlement to SEND home to school travel assistance.

4.4 Parental Visits to Schools

Travel assistance will not be provided to parents or family who wish to visit the school for any reason. Any arrangements of this nature will need to be agreed directly with the school.

Parents who wish to accompany their child to school on the first day of school will be expected to make their own arrangements. Where a school stipulates that a parent should attend on the first day, transport must be arranged with the school.

4.5 Pre-school SEND Provision

Pre-school children with an EHCP or who are undergoing statutory assessment are considered for discretionary travel assistance in the context of advice from medical, psychological and education professionals involved. If assistance were to be awarded, it would only normally be considered to the child's nearest school / nursery setting or to the school/nursery setting considered appropriate by the Local Authority. As this travel assistance is discretionary, a contribution will apply in these cases.

The charge to families for non-statutory use is therefore a contribution and does not cover the full cost of the travel assistance. The charge will be £1,000 unless the family is in receipt of income related benefits, in which case a 50% discount will continue to apply, and the charge will be £500. In either case, the charge can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments. Contributions need to be confirmed, and payment processes established by October half-term, or travel assistance may be withdrawn.

4.6 Residential Schools

Children and young people who attend a residential school that has been named in their Education, Health and Care Plan as the most appropriate school to meet their needs, will be allowed the following patterns of journeys:

1. Weekly Boarders - If required, travel assistance will normally be provided at the beginning of the week from Home-to-School and at end of the week from school to home.
2. Termly Boarders - If required, travel assistance will normally be provided at the beginning and end of each half- term.
3. 52-Week Placements - If required, travel assistance will normally be provided at the commencement and end of the placement.

Travel assistance outside these parameters will remain the responsibility of the parents to provide.

4.7 Annual Review

All children and young people who receive free Home-to-School travel assistance will be subject to review every year, and in particular:

- At the end of Year 3, when the child or young person attains the age of 8 years;
- At the end of Year 6 in preparation for transfer to Secondary education;
- Y9 review for possible requirements for extended curriculum studies;
- During Year 11 for those young people transferring to Post 16 in a maintained school;
- Following the successful completion of Independent Travel Training.

Parents should discuss their need for SEND travel assistance with school staff at their Annual Review meeting. Schools will then forward any relevant details or changes to the Council. A

range of questions with regard to travel assistance will be part of the review process.

Please note:

1. The Council has discretion to review travel arrangements for a child or young person whenever necessary. The Council may request up-to-date information from parents and/or schools in order to establish whether travel needs have changed.
2. When travel arrangements are reviewed, consideration will be given to strategies for supporting a child or young person with independent travel.

If the Council decides that a child no longer needs a passenger assistant in order to ensure their safety; or is no longer “eligible” and travel assistance should be withdrawn, the Council will inform parents of its decision and the reasons for it.

If a parent disagrees with the decision of the Council, they may appeal using the process described in Section 6 below.

5.0 Post-16 and Young Adults 19-25

5.1 Sixth Form / Further Education (Mainstream, not SEND)

The Council does not have to provide free or subsidised post-16 travel assistance. No assistance is given for a young person attending mainstream school sixth forms (years 12 and 13) and Colleges of Further Education.

Financial concessions or other support may be available to young people attending school sixth forms (years 12 and 13) and Colleges of Further Education from their respective Educational establishments. Please contact your student services team at your Educational establishment to find out what support is available.

You will be entitled to student discount for tickets on some bus services. More details of how to purchase these tickets can be found in Section 8 of this document.

5.2 Post-16 Pupils with SEND

Students with an EHCP who are transferring to further education should, in the first instance, contact their Student Services team at their educational establishment to find out what support is available to them. Young people will be entitled to student discount for tickets on some bus services. More details of how to purchase these tickets can be found in Section 8 of this document.

Local authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised Post-16 travel support to pupils with an EHCP. They have a duty to prepare and publish an annual travel assistance policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of travel assistance or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

All young people carrying on their education Post-16 must reapply annually for travel assistance. The application will be available from 1 March and needs to be submitted as soon as the placement is confirmed with the educational establishment. Where applications are received close to the beginning of the new academic year, whilst every effort will be made to put travel assistance in place for the first day of term, this cannot be guaranteed.

'Sixth form age' refers to those young people who are over 16 years of age but under 19 or continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their nineteenth birthday (years 12,13 and 14).

Financial Contributions

A contribution made by families where travel assistance is awarded for young people of sixth form age will be put in place.

In cases where young people of sixth form age are awarded travel assistance, i.e., because it is necessary due to their needs identified in their EHCP or their circumstances are exceptional, the family is required to make a contribution towards the cost.

The charge to families for non-statutory use is a contribution and does not cover the full cost of the travel assistance. The charge will be £1,000 unless the family is in receipt of income related benefits, in which case a 50% discount will continue to apply, and the charge will be

£500. In either case, the charge can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments. Contributions need to be confirmed, and payment processes established by October half-term, or travel assistance will be withdrawn.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

1. A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups below:
 - in care
 - care leavers
 - in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right
 - in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability
 - Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right
 - discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of travel assistance, meals, books, and equipment.
2. Discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example:
 - help with the cost of travel assistance, meals, books, and equipment.

To be eligible for a bursary you must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) Plan
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers)
- be studying a programme that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality (such as Ofsted), the provision must also be funded by either a Government funding agency or the Council.

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing both types of bursary. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen school or college to make an application.

Further information can be found at www.gov.uk search for Post 16 bursaries.

5.3 Young Adults 19-25 with SEND

Local authorities also have a duty to encourage, enable, and assist young people with learning difficulties / disabilities to participate in education and training, up to the age of 25. This policy uses the term 'Post 16' to include both learners of sixth form age and those with learning difficulties / disabilities up to the age of 25.

Such students may apply for support where they meet the following criteria:

- aged 19-25 when the academic year for the course starts;
- have an EHCP or SEND;

- are starting a new course for a qualification of a higher level than previously studied;
- attending a full-time course (three full days or more per week);
- attend the nearest suitable school, college or training provider that offers the qualification or course;
- live more than three miles away from the school, college, or training provider, or are unable to travel this distance because of SEND (evidence will need to be provided);
- attend during the normal school or college day during term-time only;
- unable to travel without help and no support is available from others at home, other family members, or a personal assistant.

Financial Contributions

A contribution made by families where travel assistance is awarded for young people aged 19-25 will be put in place (unless exempted by the qualifying criteria).

In cases where young people of sixth form age are awarded travel assistance, i.e., because it is necessary due to their needs identified in their EHCP or their circumstances are exceptional, the family is required to contribute towards the cost.

The charge to families for non-statutory use is a contribution and does not cover the full cost of the travel assistance. The charge will be £1,000 unless the family is in receipt of income related benefits, in which case a 50% discount will continue to apply, and the charge will be £500. In either case, the charge can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments. Contributions need to be confirmed, and payment processes established by October half-term, or travel assistance will be withdrawn.

Young parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £180 per child per week, while you're learning. Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

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

Young parents are also entitled to apply for an Under 19 Bus Only Ticket or for those aged 19 and over can apply for the 19 - 25 card.

For more information, please see www.gov.uk/care-to-learn.

6.0 If Application Rejected

6.1 Appeals

Parents are entitled to appeal against decisions by the Council refusing their application for free or subsidised travel assistance for their child to a school maintained by Stoke-on-Trent City Council or to an Academy or Free School in Stoke-on-Trent.

Parents may also use the appeal process against a decision to withdraw travel assistance for their child.

Procedure

Parents have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's decision to decline Home-to-School Travel Assistance to apply for a review.

Parents should email the All-Age Transport Team at transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk outlining why they believe the decision to refuse travel assistance should be reviewed and give details of any additional information that may not have been considered when the initial decision was made. This should include any specific information around a child's individual SEND needs or circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

Grounds for appealing

Parents may wish to challenge a decision about:

- the travel assistance arrangements offered;
- their child's eligibility;
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances; and
- the safety of the route.

Should the deadline for appeal be missed, then repeat applications will not be accepted unless there is a change in circumstances, which justify new eligibility consideration.

Stage One: Review by a Senior Officer

Within 20 working days of receipt of the parents' application form, a senior officer, independent of the panel which rejected the application, will review the original decision, and send the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review. The notification will set out:

- the nature of the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted;
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process and what factors were considered;
- the rationale for the decision reached; and information about how the parent can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

Stage Two: Review by an independent appeal panel

Parents have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's Stage One written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to Stage Two. Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents request an independent appeal panel considers representations from both the parent and officers involved in the case. The parents have the right to attend the review. The panel will give a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days). The notification will set out:

- the nature of the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted;

- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- the rationale for the decision reached; and
- information about the parents' right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the original decision-making process (but are not required to be independent of the Council) and suitably experienced (at the discretion of the Council), to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of the parents and the Council, and that road safety requirements are complied with and no child is placed at unnecessary risk.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

There is a right of complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, where a complainant considers that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled. If the complainant considers the decision of the independent panel to be flawed on public law grounds, the complainant may also apply for judicial review.

6.2 Complaints

If you feel we have given you poor service tell the member of staff or their manager as this can often be the quickest way of sorting things out. They will not treat your comments as a formal complaint unless you ask them to, but they will use your comments and take appropriate action or give you information.

The aim of the complaints system is to resolve problems quickly, as near as possible to the point they arise and by the members of staff closest to the difficulty. Any a child or young person, parent wishing to make a complaint regarding Home-to-School travel assistance should contact the relevant team in the first instance. If you do not want to do this or remain unhappy with the response you get, a complaint can be lodged via Customer Feedback at stoke.gov.uk

7.0 Your responsibilities

7.1 Parents' responsibilities

At all times parents are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and for doing all that is reasonably practicable to bring about their child's attendance.

As a minimum, parents are expected to:

1. Ensure that the school and the Council have your up-to-date contact details, including any mobile phone number, and any emergency contact details.
2. Make sure that your child is ready five minutes before a pick-up, whether at home or from a pick-up point. Please be aware that if your child is late for the pick-up and the driver has already left, it will be your responsibility to take the child to school.
3. Always be at home or the drop-off point to meet your child or make arrangements for your alternative emergency contact to meet your child on your behalf.
4. Ensure that your child is aware of appropriate behaviour whilst travelling to and from school.
5. Make your own transport arrangements should your child:
 - finish school before the normal departure time.
 - be taken ill at school and require returning home early.
 - be unable to travel at the normal time, for example due to detention or exclusion.
 - attend breakfast clubs or after school clubs.
 - be on work experience.
6. Make your own transport arrangements if a visiting relative or foreign student stays with the family and attends school with your child.
7. Ensure sufficient notice is provided to the relevant council team to reassess your child's eligibility to receive travel assistance if the family move home or child changes schools.
8. Make your own transport arrangements if the family should move or the child change schools, until the reassessment of your child's eligibility has been undertaken by the council.
9. If advised that your child will be travelling by a commissioned taxi, when informed which company will be collecting / dropping off your child, contact the operator to confirm the necessary arrangements.
10. Provide suitable child seats or other safety equipment for the age and abilities of their child. It is recommended that you speak to your taxi or minibus operator before purchasing this equipment, to confirm what equipment will be required. (Operators will provide standard seat belts and suitable restraints for wheelchairs and wheelchair users.)
11. Notify the All-Age Transport Team if your child is going to be absent from school for more than one school day, whether for sickness, holiday, or other reason.

If the child is eligible to receive travel assistance, parents are reminded that they are responsible for making their own arrangements until such time as the details of the assistance are confirmed.

7.2 Parents Not at Home

Where travel assistance is provided, it is expected that a parent or suitable adult will be at the home address or other designated drop-off point to receive the young person from the vehicle.

If the Parent or Guardian is not at home or the drop-off point the driver may take the child back to school or to another appropriate place of safety as agreed with the Social Care team.

The Council reserves the right to pass on any additional costs incurred to the parents. All incidents will be recorded and considered by the relevant transport teams. In the event of frequent repeated incidents, travel assistance may be suspended or withdrawn, pending re-assessment. Information may also be shared with social care for safeguarding reasons.

7.3 Code of Conduct for Pupils Using Home-to-School Travel Assistance

There is a responsibility on all young people to behave appropriately whilst travelling. Where any behaviour falls short of the required standards, the Council has mechanisms to work with parents, school, and transport providers to rectify problems, and it retains the right to suspend or remove travel assistance or passes where this is deemed appropriate. It is the responsibility of young people to:

- Arrive for their transport in good time and with a valid travel pass for travel if one is issued
- Behave in a safe and responsible way at all times
- Get on the correct vehicle, or the first one for which they have a valid pass if issued
- Show any passes to the driver or other officials when asked
- Follow all instructions from the driver, inspector or other official at all times especially in an emergency
- Wear seatbelts at all times where these are provided, and
- Get off safely at the right stop and crossroads carefully.

Children and young people with special educational needs are still expected to behave in a safe and appropriate manner whilst travelling. The Council will work with schools, parents, and the child to help manage behaviours to ensure the ongoing safety and comfort of all passengers and drivers and passenger assistants.

The following behaviour is not acceptable and if reported, parents will be contacted by the Council as to the action that will be taken. Sanctions may include confiscation of any passes, suspension or withdrawal of travel assistance and charges may be made for any damage caused.

Nuisance or offensive behaviour

This includes irritating and unpleasant behaviour which, whilst not necessarily a threat to safety, may impair the comfort of others. Such behaviour includes:

- Failing to respond to the driver or passenger assistant appropriately.
- Failing to show a valid travel pass (if issued) on request of a driver or inspector.
- Eating or drinking on the vehicle
- Smoking / Vaping
- Spitting
- Using abusive language

- Making excessive noise
- Placing feet on the seats of the vehicle.

Dangerous behaviour

This includes behaviour which may present some potential or actual threat to the physical safety of the child and others and includes:

- Standing on the vehicle steps or in the doorway
- Leaning out of the window or door
- Harassing or verbally abusing other passengers or the driver or passenger assistant.
- Bullying, including the use of language, which is threatening or abusive, and is intended to harass, alarm, or distress someone.
- Running around inside the vehicle or climbing on the seats.
- Failing or refusing to wear a seat belt (if fitted).

Destructive or very dangerous behaviour

This category includes behaviour which causes or has the potential to cause physical injury to others and damage to the vehicle and includes:

- Fighting
- Threatening physical violence
- Breaking windows
- Interfering with the opening of doors or emergency exits
- Causing damage to seats, seatbelts, or other equipment
- Drawing graffiti including scratching glass
- Spraying aerosols.

Extremely dangerous or life-threatening behavior

This category includes behaviour which is likely to cause serious injury to others and includes:

- Physical assault on the driver, passenger assistant, or other passengers
- Lighting fires including igniting aerosols
- Threatening physical violence with a dangerous weapon
- Interfering with the vehicle controls.

Any pupil behaving in an inappropriate or dangerous manner will be reported and their parents will be contacted by the Council as to the action that will be taken.

If behaviour on transport does not meet reasonable standards, considering the child's age, SEND Needs and abilities, and also the severity and frequency of the misbehavior, then travel assistance may be withdrawn. If travel assistance is withdrawn for poor behaviour the Council is not obliged to provide any further travel assistance.

Bullying, including the use of hate speech, will not be tolerated and will be reported to parents and school. Any child or young person found to be bullying or intimidating others will have their travel assistance withdrawn.

8.0 Travel Assistance Provision

8.1 Travel Assistance Options Explained

Independent travel training

Independent travel training helps young people with special educational needs to travel independently to school or college. Being able to access public transport provides important life skills for students. It will help students make their own decisions about how they live and what they want to achieve, develop an important skill for life, and open up educational, social and employment opportunities.

Young people are trained to travel safely from Home-to-School/college and from school/college to home therefore promoting their independence. The training aims to provide the skills and knowledge that is needed to be able to complete journeys safely, confidently, and successfully. Once the young person has successfully completed travel training, the expectation is that they will want to utilise these new skills to travel more independently to school or college.

Personal Travel Budgets

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is money paid directly to you to make your own arrangements for the journey between home and school for your child. PTBs can be ideal if your child's assessed needs mean that they have a very flexible school timetable and the start and end times of their school day are not consistent. It is based on the distance between your home and your child's school and bears no relationship to the cost of a taxi or hired vehicle.

You may be eligible for a PTB for children with an EHCP and who have also been assessed as eligible to receive Home-to-School travel assistance. It is granted at the discretion of the Council and will therefore not automatically be given. A PTB is a contribution towards the cost of travel and may not meet the full cost of the means of transportation you choose. All PTB claims should be made monthly but will only be considered within 3 months of provision.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw payment of a PTB where the attendance of the child at school is not satisfactory, or where they have reason to believe that the funding is not being utilised to facilitate the child's attendance.

8.2 Other Ways to Get to School

The Transport Operations Team at Stoke-on-Trent City Council are working with schools to change habits and encourage more children and families to choose active travel for their journeys to and from school.

The Council has a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote sustainable travel to school.

Using some of the ideas explained below, parents and their children can help to tackle congestion on the school run and help to create a cleaner, greener, healthier school and community

Walk to school

Walking to school contributes to the recommended daily physical activity for you and your children. It also helps to reduce congestion, improves air quality, and teaches children valuable road safety skills.

The Transport Operations Team have Travel Wise maps showing 10 minute walking zones for every primary and secondary school in the City or why not speak to your school about setting up a walking bus. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a route with set meeting points, a timetable, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

Cycle or Scoot to school

If you live a little bit further away and can't walk to school, why not think about cycling or scooting? Parents can cycle or scoot with their children too. There are over 160 km of surfaced cycle routes in Stoke-on-Trent of which 80km are off road and utilise greenways, canal towpaths, and river paths, away from traffic. Many schools have been assisted in upgrading their facilities for children and young people who wish to cycle or scoot to school, including providing secure cycle shelters and scooter pods.

Public Transport

Buses and trains may prove to be a good option for some children and young people. Many of our secondary schools are well served by the local bus network. Using public transport will give young people life skills and responsibility. Parents may need to practice the journey with them before letting them travel alone.

Use www.tfwm.org.uk to plan your journey or look at First Group website (www.firstbus.co.uk/potteries) for details of services to each school.

Discounted Bus Tickets

All young people aged between 5 and 15 are entitled to reduced cost travel on First Buses. If you are aged 15 and under, but look older, you can pick up a free proof of age card from First Bus travel shops.

If you are over 16 and in full time education, you are entitled to First Bus student ticket discounts - you can see the tickets available at and go to the Tickets page. You will need to show student ID to buy and use student tickets. If you do not have student ID, please speak to your school, college, or education provider.

Student Smart tickets

The Smart multi-operator bus pass allows you to travel on buses provided by different operators across North Staffordshire with just one ticket. You can travel with any of the bus operators listed below, on any bus route, at any time of day across Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and North Staffordshire within the boundaries of the scheme.

Smart tickets cannot be used to travel to or from areas outside of the boundary, but you can use it to travel up to the boundary and pay the additional fare to your final destination. Smart tickets are valid on the following bus operators' services:

- First
- D&G
- Scraggs
- Stanton's of Stoke.

Weekly, monthly, and three-month tickets are available.

Tickets can be bought from the college travel office if you are studying at:

- Stoke-on-Trent College

- Newcastle-under-Lyme College
- Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College
- Staffordshire University
- Keele University.

If you study at a Sixth Form or university not listed above, you can buy a Student Smart ticket from one of the following locations when you show your student identification:

- One Smithfield, Hanley
- Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre
- Stoke One-Stop Shop
- Tunstall Local Centre.

You can also buy daily and weekly tickets on the bus from the driver (30-day and 90-day passes cannot be bought on the bus).

If you do not have Student ID, please speak to your school, college, or education provider.

For more information about the Student Smart Ticket, including where the boundaries are, go to stoke.gov.uk and search for smart bus ticket.

Other operators may have alternative ticket ranges available, and you should check with them directly.

Car sharing

Parents can reduce the cost and time involved in the school-run by sharing cars with friends and neighbours. Ask your chosen school if they can introduce you to other parents travelling from the same area. If half of UK motorists received a lift one day a week, congestion and pollution would be reduced by 10%.

Park & Stride

In order to reduce the congestion and pollution caused by parents dropping off and picking up their children at the school gates, many schools are introducing a Park & Stride scheme. Park & Stride simply means driving some of the way to school, parking away from the school entrance and walking the rest of the way.

Park & Stride is particularly good for families that live too far from the school to comfortably walk the whole way. It has the added benefit of reducing congestion around the school entrance, making it safer for children to enter their school. Some schools have entered into arrangements with local businesses to allow short term parking in nearby private car parks for this purpose.

Responsible parking

Inconsiderate parking and manoeuvring in the vicinity of school entrances can present a significant safety hazard. Parents should support their school, other road users, and local residents by avoiding parking on 'School Keep-Clear' and other road markings and, where possible, park or drop-off a safe distance from the school and encourage their child to walk the last bit of the way to the school gates.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Civil Enforcement Team will work with schools and Local Policing Units to take action against inconsiderate and dangerous parking.

9.0 Frequently Asked Questions

9.1 FAQs

When do I need to apply for Travel Assistance?

Where parents apply for travel assistance to start in a new academic year, the application form will be available from 1 March and needs to be submitted as soon as the placement is confirmed with the educational establishment to ensure that the assistance is in place for the child on the first day of term.

Can I get Travel assistance to any school of my choice?

Travel assistance will only be provided to your nearest appropriate school where it is more than the relevant distance from home for the age or abilities of the child. When deciding which is the nearest appropriate school for transport purposes, the Local Authority do not take into account parents' wishes. Where parents name schools outside of their local area, in most cases it will be their responsibility to ensure their children can access their preferred school.

My eldest child gets Travel Assistance, so will my younger one get it too?

Where a younger sibling will attend the same school as an older sibling, who currently receives travel assistance, the younger sibling will not necessarily receive travel assistance just because the older one does. Each child is assessed in accordance with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Travel Assistance Policy on an individual basis.

My child has some lessons off-site at another school. Can we have travel assistance to both?

Travel assistance is only granted to one school. Any travel assistance to an additional off-site provision or school is the responsibility of the parent or the school where the child is on roll.

I have moved address but want my child to remain at their current school. Can we have travel assistance as the school is now further away from home?

Usually moving further away does not automatically entitle your child to travel assistance. If your child's current school is not deemed as your nearest appropriate school to the new home, your child may not be eligible to receive travel assistance.

It will remain the parents' responsibility to make their own arrangements to transport their children to and from school, until any new travel assistance is in place and confirmed or if travel assistance is refused.

My child has an Education, Health, and Care Plan. Can they have travel assistance to school? There is no guarantee that a child or young person who receives an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will receive travel assistance. All children and young people will be assessed in accordance with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Travel Assistance Policy, regardless of whether they hold an EHCP or not. Parents who believe their child may be entitled to travel assistance will need to make an application. Parents should contact the All-Age Transport Team for more information. The contact details are at the end of this policy

I do not like the bus. Can my child have a taxi?

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has the responsibility to ensure the best use of resources on behalf of the residents and Council Taxpayers of the City. Although the views of parents and young

people will be considered, the routes and types of travel assistance offered are determined by the Council. They will determine the mode of transport that delivers the best value for money for Stoke-on-Trent taxpayers, taking into account any special arrangements needed to support the child's particular needs.

I have concerns regarding my child's travel operator or a Passenger Assistant – what do I do?

You will need to contact the All-Age Transport Team on 01782 233737 or by email at transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk setting out your concerns. These will be investigated and followed up if it is found necessary to do so.

I am not sure whether my child will be entitled to travel assistance. What should I do?

Parents should first read through the information given in Sections 1 and 2 of this document. If you have done this and are still unsure whether your child may be eligible for assistance, please contact the All-Age Transport Team on 01782 233737 or by email at transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk to discuss the position.

My child has lost their bus pass. How do I get a replacement?

You will need to contact the team who issued the pass. There is a charge of £10 which can be paid over the phone with a credit/debit card. The replacement pass can either be sent to your home address or school/college, whichever you prefer.

What do I do if I have a safeguarding concern regarding transport provision?

You will need to contact the All-Age Transport Team as soon as possible either by emailing transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk or by telephone on 01782 233737.

10.0 Supporting Information

10.1 Summary of Provision

Mainstream

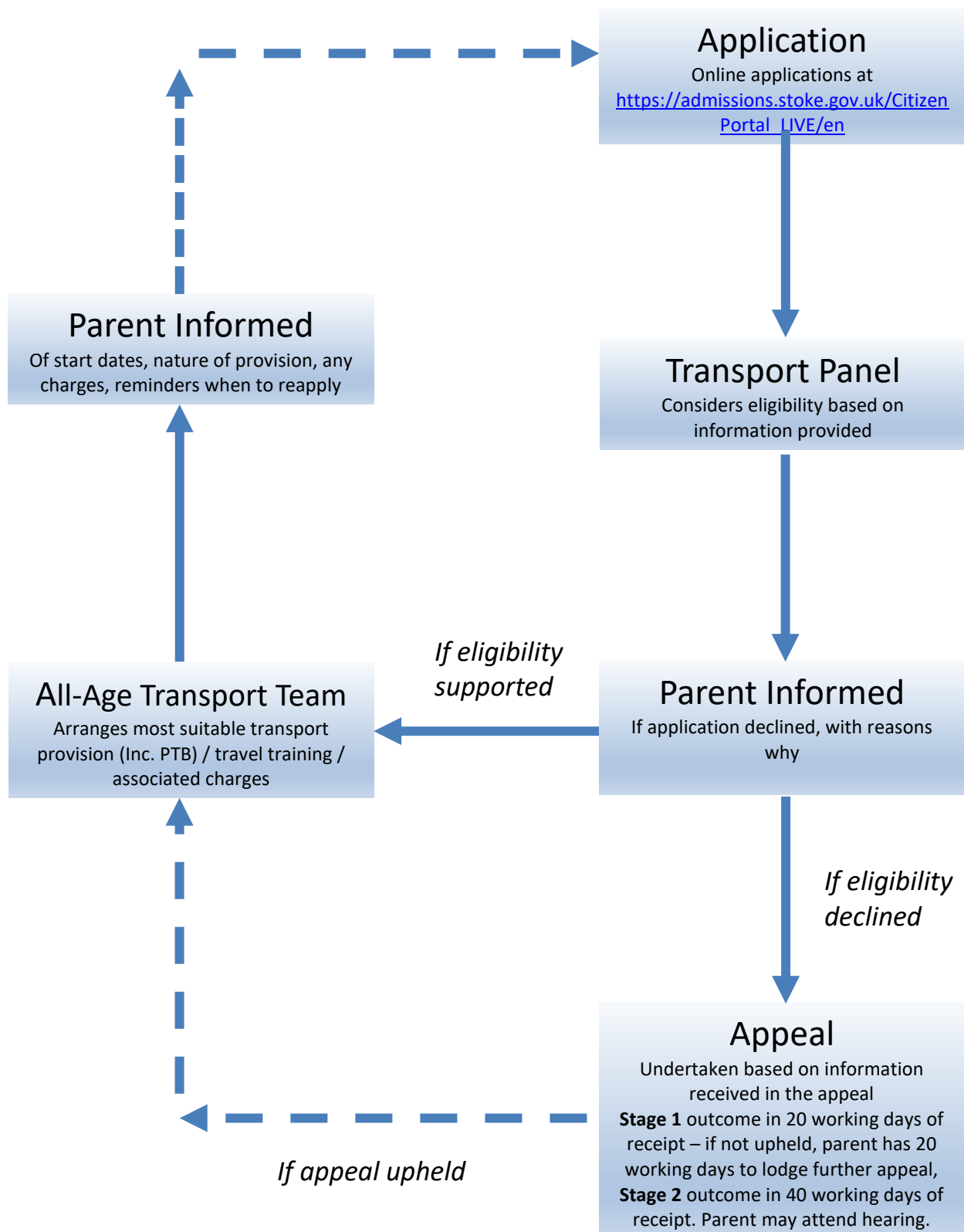
Age Range	Statutory Provision?	Contribution May Apply?	Apply Via	Appeal possible?	Annual Reapplication?
5-16	✓	✗	www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport	✓	Online

SEND

Age Range	Statutory Provision?	Contribution May Apply?	Apply Via	Appeal possible?	Annual Reapplication?
Under-5	✗	✓	www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport	✓	Online
5-16	✓	✗	www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport	✓	If circumstances change – online
Post-16	✗	✓	www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport	✓	✓
19-25	✗	✓	www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20007/schools_and_education/21/school_transport	✓	✓

10.2 Process Flowchart

Home-to-School Transport Process



10.3 Personal Transport Budgets - Rates

	Child/Young Person - meets criteria for Home-to-School travel assistance	Total Miles per day (Inc. return)	Daily Rate
Category 1	Standard vehicle with no escort Child has limited behavioural, physical, or learning difficulties Can travel with others if necessary	Over 3 miles per day	£5.12
		Over 10 miles per day	£10.25
		Over 20 miles per day	£15.38
Category 2	Standard vehicle with escort or passenger assistant Child has moderate behavioural, physical, or learning difficulties	Over 3 miles per day	£10.25
		Over 10 miles per day	£15.38
		Over 20 miles per day	£20.50
Category 3	Standard vehicle with suitably trained (SEND) escort or passenger assistant Child has severe learning difficulties /disabilities	Over 3 miles per day	£15.38
		Over 10 miles per day	£20.50
		Over 20 miles per day	£25.64
Category 4	Specialist vehicle with specialist escort or passenger assistant Vehicle is required to cater for child/young person with severe physical and/or health difficulties/disability (e.g., wheelchair adapted vehicle)	Over 3 miles per day	£25.64
		Over 10 miles per day	£30.76

If a daily rate cannot be agreed, then a mileage rate of 45p per mile will apply. Statutory mileage is based on age.

Evidence will be requested from schools to confirm attendance in line with claims made. Please note that it is at the Council's discretion to offer a personal transport rate as the Council may consider that commissioned transport may be more appropriate. **All PTB claims should be made monthly but will only be considered within 3 months of provision.**

Any changes in circumstances may affect the eligibility for PTB support and need to be reported to the All-Age Transport Team immediately. Failure to do so could lead to the withdrawal of the PTB agreement and any funds overpaid will be liable for repayment.

10.4 Useful Contacts

Websites for information and bus tickets:

www.stoke.gov.uk

www.tfwm.org.uk

www.firstbus.co.uk/potteries

www.dgbus.co.uk

Local Offer: localoffer.stoke.gov.uk

All information within the Local Offer section is here to support families of children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND).

All-Age Transport Team

Phone: 01782 233737

Email: transportrequests@stoke.gov.uk or schooltransport@stoke.gov.uk

SENMAS Monitoring and Assessment Service – for EHCP

Phone: 01782 231863

Email: senmas@stoke.gov.uk

SENDIASS - (SEND Information, Advice and Support Service)

SENDIASS provides confidential, impartial, free, high quality information, advice and support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND); children and young people with disabilities; and their parents.

Tel: 01782 234701

E-mail: iass@stoke.gov.uk

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Civic Centre Glebe Street Stoke-on-Trent ST4 1HH

Website: www.stoke.gov.uk