

SEND Travel Assistance

This policy tells you how you can apply for travel assistance for your child to travel between home and school and how Stoke-on-Trent City Council will make the decision on whether or not you are eligible for support.

The law imposes duties upon local authorities in respect of the provision of travel assistance. These are called statutory duties and local authorities must comply with them. The law does not usually prescribe how the local authority discharges its statutory duties

We have developed this SEND Travel Assistance Policy with regard to the local authorities’ statutory duties equality legislation

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| The Legal Guidance Local authorities have a statutory duty with regards to travel assistance as set out in the Education Act 1996 and Schedule 35B of the Act which was amended by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ([here](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents))  Sections 508B and 508C of the Act obligates 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” ([here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance)).  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 29 January 2015 ([here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25)). |

Throughout this policy:

Parent or parent/carer = any person with parental responsibility for the child

Child = any child or young person

Home = the home address or agreed group drop off and collection points for transport

# Key Principles

Parents (or legal guardians) are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly regardless of whether local authority travel assistance is provided, and are expected to make reasonable arrangements for their child to get to and from school, unless the child is vulnerable as a consequence of the child having special educational needs and accordingly eligible for travel assistance

If travel assistance is provided it will be tailored to the individual needs and circumstances of the child and be designed, if feasible, to promote independence.

Wherever appropriate environmentally sustainable forms of transport will be promoted, including walking, cycling and public transport.

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| **Local Authority Responsibilities** | **Your Responsibilities** |
| * To take all information provide 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 | * 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 behavior on transport * To let us know if your child is not using transport (ie for holiday or period of sickness lasting more than a day or two) * To give us as much notice as possible if you are planning to move home or change schools |

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# Section One: Is my child eligible to apply for Travel Assistance?

Submitting an application for travel assistance does not mean that travel assistance will be provided. Anyone can apply for travel assistance but only children of statutory school age are eligible for travel assistance, if your child is under or over statutory school age please refer to sections 4 and 7.

Is your child:

* Of Statutory School Age (5 to 16)
* Ordinarily resident in Stoke-on-Trent

If you can answer Yes to both questions you are eligible to apply for travel assistance.

If your child is aged under 5 or over 16 the authority may provide travel assistance on a discretionary basis, please refer to section seven.

Please read the information on exclusions (page 12) and how travel assistance decisions are made (page 6) before applying.

If you need any assistance in completing the travel assistance assessment form please seek support from the SENCO at your child’s school or chosen school or from your child’s social worker (if they have one). You can also contact SENDIASS for support and assistance if you prefer. Contact details for SENDIASS can be found on the Local Offer

## Exclusions

Children under the age of 5 who attend nursery or other pre-school provision are not eligible for travel assistance. The local authority may provide discretionary funding if it is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply (see Section Four).

If you have chosen a different school for your child to attend from the one named by the local authority (parental choice) the local authority does not have a statutory duty to provide travel assistance to your choice of school and assistance will not be provided, unless the local authority is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply.

### What do we mean by nearest appropriate school?

The nearest appropriate school is the nearest school to where the child lives that is appropriate for their age, ability, aptitude, is suitable to meet their needs and which has a place available for the child.

### What do we mean by ordinarily resident in Stoke-on-Trent?

If you live outside Stoke-on-Trent then you are not eligible to apply for travel assistance from Stoke-on-Trent City Council even if your child attends a school in Stoke-on-Trent. You should apply to the local authority where you are ordinarily resident or where the child lives for the majority of the time.

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| Summary  * You can apply for travel assistance if your child is aged between 5 and 16 and lives in Stoke-on-Trent. * Children under the age of 5 are not automatically entitled to travel assistance but it may be provided on a discretionary basis in which case a financial contribution from the child’s parent or legal guardian may be required. (See Section four). * Children over the age of 16 and in full time education are not automatically entitled to travel assistance but it may be provided on a discretionally basis. A financial contribution may be required. (See Section Seven). |

### Walking

The Department for Education has published guidance on the distance that children can reasonably be expected to walk to school.

Children aged between 5 and 8 years old = Up to 2 miles.

Children aged over 8 years old = Up to 3 miles.

The distance is measured using the shortest safe walking route along which a child, accompanied by a parent as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

If the nature of your child's SEND means that they could not walk to school safely, even accompanied, then a form of travel assistance will be considered notwithstanding the distances set out in the guidance.

The distance between your child’s home and school needs to be considered when assessing the need for transport provision but it is not the deciding factor.

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| Summary  * Children who live within the statutory walking distance and whose SEND does not prevent them from walking to school safely will usually be expected to walk |

# Section Two: How is the decision to provide Travel Assistance made?

Each application is assessed on its individual merits. Please note that the fact a child has an Education, Health and Care plan does not guarantee that travel assistance will be provided and you can apply for travel assistance if your child does not have an Education, Health and Care plan.

Whether to provide travel assistance and the type of travel assistance provided will be decided with regard to the child’s individually assessed needs and a risk assessment.

All relevant information provided by parents, the school, other professionals who know the child and, when appropriate, the child themselves will be considered.

Before deciding, we will consider:

* The age of the child
* The nature and severity of the child’s SEND (and disability and/or mobility) and how it affects their ability to travel
* Whether a walking route is appropriate
* Whether the child may present a risk to themselves or others

## Does or will, the child attend their nearest appropriate school?

The nearest appropriate school is the nearest school to where the child usually lives, which has places available that can provide an appropriate education for the age, ability and aptitude of your child and the child’s special educational needs.

If you have chosen to have your child attend a different school (parental choice) the local authority is not obliged to provide any form of travel assistance, unless the local authority is satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply.

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| Summary  * If a child does not attend their nearest appropriate school the authority is not obliged to provide travel assistance, unless exceptional circumstances apply |

# Section Three: What types of Travel Assistance are there?

If your child is eligible for travel assistance we will consider what type of travel assistance is most suitable.

The authority does not have a statutory duty to provide travel assistance if you live within the statutory walking distance (see Section one above) and your child can safely walk to school, accompanied by a parent if necessary.

## Public Transport

The local authority will assess whether your child's needs for travel assistance can be safely met using the public transport available. In making this decision we will consider the following :

* Whether your child's SEND, disability or mobility difficulties would cause them difficulty in using public transport or impact on their ability to use public transport safely (considering any travel training they may have had, or which may be appropriate for them to have).
* Whether there is, appropriate public transport available to meet your child's SEND needs (for example availability of wheelchair spaces on public buses or children who need specialist seating or supports to travel safely), it may not be suitable to use public transport in these circumstances and therefore a different form of transport would be offered.
* Whether your child would be vulnerable or at risk of danger to themselves or others if they were to use public transport.
* The distance and complexity of the journey by public transport (including to/from bus stops) and the regularity of the route.

If public transport is considered suitable to meet your child’s need the local authority will issue a bus pass. Parents may need to accompany their child on a public bus route in line with their responsibility to ensure their child attends school. Please note that bus passes are not provided to parents who are accompanying their child.

The guidance for the length of time a child should spend on the journey to school is 45 minutes for a primary school aged child and 75 minutes for a secondary school aged child.

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| Summary  * Children who can safely use public transport (accompanied as necessary) and where there is a suitable public transport service available will be expected to use public transport. |

### Other Forms of Travel Assistance

If your child is eligible for travel assistance but either a walking route or public transport is not appropriate other forms of travel assistance will be considered.

Other forms of transport and support include

* School Bus
* Private Bus
* Private Taxi
* Personal Travel Budget (PTB)
* Independent Travel Training

The form of travel assistance provided will depend upon both the assessed needs of your child and the most effective use of the vehicles available. In most cases a child will share transport with other children who attend the same school. If your child’s SEND assessed needs are such that they cannot travel safely with other children (because of the risk to self / others) then individual transport can be considered.

Depending on the assessed needs and abilities of your child travel assistance may be provided from a safe drop off / collection point rather than from their home address. Drop off and collection points will take into account the suitability and safety of the location for your child. Parents may be expected to wait with their child for collection and meet them at the drop off point. Drop off and collection points are identified as appropriate for the route and where possible grouped to reduce the number of stops. Drop off and collection points cannot be set to accommodate individual preferences.

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| Summary  * Children who live outside the statutory walking distance or whose needs mean that walking to school is not practical or who are unable to use public transport (whether because of level of need or unsuitability of public transport) will be provided with another form of travel assistance from home to school. |

### Passenger Assistants

A passenger assistant may be required to support some young people on the journey between home to school.

If your child is sharing a transport with other children the local authority may provide one passenger assistant to meet the needs of several children.

The individual needs of children will be considered when deciding if a passenger assistant is needed and what ratio of support (ie one to one) is required.

Passenger Assistants will support the driver of the transport to ensure that they are able to drive without unnecessary distractions. They can also support children with getting on and off the transport at the start and end of their journey and subject to the needs of the child ensure that they safely reach their destination.

All passenger assistants will have been subject to an enhanced Disclosure and Barring check (DBS) and will have completed safeguarding training.

Passenger assistants are not qualified to administer medication. In the event of a medical emergency an ambulance will be called.

### Parent Escort

Sometimes we may need a parent, carer or guardian to accompany their child in the vehicle to school in a private taxi depending on the circumstances and needs of their child.  If a parent, carer or guardian needs to accompany their child in the private taxi they may be entitled to an escort allowance which will be paid at the same rate as the national minimum wage.

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| Summary  * Passenger Assistance may be provided if required to meet individual child’s needs. * A passenger assistant may support multiple children on a transport |

### Personal Travel Budget

A personal travel budget is money paid directly to you to support you to make your own arrangements for the journey between home and school for your child. Personal Travel Budgets can be ideal if your child’s assessed needs mean that they have a very flexible school timetable and that the start and end times of their school day are not consistent.

You do not have to accept a Personal Travel Budget if you do not want one. In the event of a delay in being able to provide your child with a place on a commissioned transport however we may offer you a personal travel budget for the period between your application for transport provision being approved and the transport provision being put in place.

Please note that Personal Travel Budgets are a contribution towards the cost of travel and may not meet the full cost of the means of transportation that you choose.

Guidance on how to apply for a Personal Budget and more information on how the value of a personal transport budget is calculated can be found [here](http://localoffer.stoke.gov.uk/kb5/stoke/directory/site.page?id=vC3izyXNh5o)

The acceptance of a Personal Travel Budget is voluntary and parents can choose to opt out of using a personal travel budget at any point. If your child still needs travel assistance you will need to complete a new request for an assessment and it may take some time before an alternative method of travel assistance can be arrange for your child, during this period parents are responsible for ensuring their child travels to school.

Once a personal travel budget has ceased parents might be required to return any of the personal travel budget that has not been used to provide transport from home to school .

### Independent Travel Training

Your child’s need for travel assistance may be met by providing suitable independent travel training if appropriate.

If the local authority considers that provision of travel training is suitable for your child the form of such training will be determined based on your child’s individual needs

# Section Four: Exceptional Circumstances

## Pre School Children

The local authority does not have a statutory duty to provide travel assistance for children under the age of 5 because they are below statutory school age.

We may consider providing travel assistance on a discretionary basis if exceptional circumstances apply. Normally this would only be considered if the child attends the nearest appropriate school/nursery and if travel assistance is recommended by medical, social care or education professionals with an understanding of the child's needs and circumstances .

If a child under statutory school age is provided with travel assistance a contribution towards the cost of the transport may be required.

The contribution will be an annual figure of £1,000.00 unless the family receives income related benefits (details of the benefits can be found on the Local Offer), Under such circumstances a 50% discount will apply and the charge will be £500.00. The financial contribution can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments.

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| Summary  * The local authority is not obliged to provide travel assistance to children under the age of 5. * If travel assistance is provided a financial contribution may be required. |

### Temporary Medical Conditions

The local authority will consider an application for temporary travel assistance for your child if they have a temporary medical need, even if they live within statutory walking distance and would normally be expected to walk to school.

Parents will need to complete the application requesting an assessment for travel assistance and provide written evidence from a medical professional which recommend that your child receives temporary travel assistance.

In the application you will need to explain why the temporary need cannot be met by other means (i.e. public transport or a vehicle available to the family).

Assistance provided will be reviewed at regular intervals and the travel assistance will stop when your child's medical need no longer justifies it.

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| Summary  * Additional travel assistance may be provided on a temporary basis if your child has a medical condition that means their normal method of getting to and from school is no longer possible and the travel assistance assessment finds them eligible for temporary assistance. |

### Children in Care

The local authority understands the importance of maintaining consistency for children in care and may use discretionary powers to provide travel assistance to support the child's attendance at their usual school even if no other eligibility criteria is met, in order to maintain the stability of their educational provision. Each case will be considered on its own merits.

If foster carers or residential care homes have been provided with an allowance for transport as part of the care plan additional travel assistance may not be provided as doing so would be double funding.

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| Summary Travel assistance for children in care will be considered on a case by case basis and take account of the importance of maintaining consistency |

### Other Exceptional Circumstances

If you can identify other relevant circumstances which you do not believe have been addressed by this policy please include them (providing evidence of such circumstances, especially in regard to medical conditions) in your application.

In some instances, we may consider making short term amendments to travel arrangements if there are exceptional reasons for doing so

Exceptions circumstances must relate to the needs of the child. Please note that applications which are based upon the needs of parents or other members of the family are unlikely to be successful.

Please note that a need of a parent to take other children to school or to travel to work is not usually considered to be an exceptional circumstance.

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| Summary If you are affected by other circumstances not covered here which you feel may constitute exceptional circumstances please provide information on your situation in your application |

# Section Five: How is your application for travel assistance assessed?

A decision on whether to provide travel assistance shall be made by the Transport Panel who will consider all the information provided on the assessment form before making their decision. The Transport Panel will assess the application from a range of perspectives.

Whether travel assistance is provided and if so the type of travel assistance provided are determined in accordance with the individual assessed needs and risk assessment for your child.

It is not possible for parents to attend the Transport Panel so it is important that you provide as much information as possible when completing the assessment form for travel assistance, including supporting evidence whenever possible. The panel can only consider concerns regarding the distance or danger of the route the child would need to travel to school if such concerned are set out in the assessment form.

You shall be informed if travel assistance is going to be provided within 4 weeks of the assessment form being considered. At this time, it may not be possible to tell you how the travel assistance will be provided.

Travel assistance will reflect your child's needs and circumstances but also has to be provided in a sustainable and cost-effective way for the local authority. The form of travel assistance provided will depend both on the needs of your child and on making the most effective use of the vehicles available. The local authority may need to wait to have a fuller picture of the type and number of travel assistance that need to be arranged before they can let you know how your child's needs will be met. Travel assistance is planned to make the most efficient use of transport and ensure that journey times are not longer than necessary for any of the children supported. For primary school aged children, the maximum journey time is 45 minutes for secondary school aged children the maximum journey time is 75 minutes. We will endeavor to provide you with as much notice as we can.

Transport is usually provided only for the start and end of the standard school day. This is to make the best use of the vehicles. If your child’s needs require a non-standard school timetable as stipulated in your EHC plan the authority may make reasonable adjustments to provide transport at the times that it is required. This could be by offering a personal travel budget for the days that have a non-standard timetable. Extra-curricular activities and before or after school clubs are not considered part of the school timetable for this.

If your child attends a residential school, travel assistance may be provided to facilitate their pattern of attendance. If your child is a weekly boarder, travel assistance may be provided for the start and end of each week, for termly boarders at the start and end of each half term. For any other duration of placement travel assistance may be provided at the start and end of the placement.

Transport is not provided for placements that have been arranged by the school, whether these are short or long term. If your child needs travel assistance to travel to an alternative provision (AP) placement arranged by the school then this needs to be discussed with the school.

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| Summary  * Your application will be considered by a panel which includes school and health representatives. * Your child’s circumstances, abilities and needs will be considered before a decision is made. * We will tell you whether travel assistance will be provided within 4 weeks, but we may not be able to tell you the form of assistance until closer to the time that transport will start, if travel assistance is being provided by a commissioned vehicle. |

# Section Six: Exclusions

Travel assistance is to support children to attend school from the start to the end of the standard school day. Travel assistance is not available for any of the following circumstances unless the Council considers there to be an exceptional reason ;

* Hospital, dental or other medical appointments
* Children who have been taken ill during the school day, or children in a residential placement who are unable to use the scheduled transport due to illness
* Travel to/from after school clubs or other extra-curricular activities
* Travel between school sites
* Travel to/from work experience placements or other placements the school has organised
* Students on a non-standard timetable by personal preference
* Travel for familiarization or settling in visits to a new school or educational setting
* Parental visits for non-residential special school placements
* Children who miss the scheduled transport time due to detention or exclusion

Travel assistance is planned to make the most efficient use of transport and ensure that journey times are not longer than necessary for any of the children supported.

Travel assistance is unable to accommodate any individual preference in terms of collection and drop off times or locations.

Travel assistance can only be provided from one home address to school, this is the home address at which your child spends most school nights and is normally the address registered for child benefit. Travel from a second address will be considered if there are exceptional reasons for doing so.

Travel assistance is usually only provided at times consistent with a standard school day. If your child has a different schedule that follows non-standard timings, where the changes are required to meet their individual needs and included in their EHC plan then assistance can be provided. Depending on the needs of the child and the availability of suitable transport you may be offered a personal travel budget to meet this need.

Travel assistance arrangements will be reviewed annually to ensure that they continue to meet your child's needs and supports their progress towards increased independence and preparation for adulthood. Statutory requirements prevent us from merging the review process for EHC plans and travel assistance assessments, however wherever possible we will endeavor to schedule both reviews at the same time.

We will try to keep any changes to your child's travel assistance to a minimum during each school year but if you receive travel assistance by a commissioned taxi or minibus it may sometimes be necessary to vary drop off / collection times or transport provided. Where a change is required we will inform you with as much notice as possible.

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| Summary Travel assistance is provided for the journey between home and school at the start and end of each school day and may not be provided for journeys outside of these times. |

# Section Seven: Travel Assistance for young people aged 16+

The authority does not have a statutory duty to provide travel assistance to young people once they have passed statutory school age (16yrs old - end of Year 11) however recognising that the ability to travel safely to an education setting can be a barrier for some young people transport can be provided, assuming other eligibility criteria are met.

Requests for Travel Assistance will be considered and if approved may be provided by either:

* Independent Travel Training (with the school’s recommendation & parent approval)
* A Personal Travel Assistance Budget
* Space on a designated transport for the school
* A bus pass or concessionary pass

If travel assistance is provided it must be reapplied for every year and the application must be made by May to start in the next academic year.

If you are unable to apply before the end of May as a decision on placement has not been made you should request travel assistance as soon as you can once the placement decision has been made.

A contribution towards travel assistance may be required.

## Financial Contributions

If a young person over statutory school age is provided with travel assistance a contribution towards the cost of the transport may be required. This includes if travel assistance is provided by way of a personal travel budget, unless the young person is likely to qualify for free transport under the adult transport duty when post 19+.

The contribution does not cover the full cost of the transport assistance provided.

The charge will be £1,000.00 annually unless the family receives income related benefits (details of the benefits can be found on the Local Offer), in which case a 50% discount will apply and the charge will be £500.00. The financial contribution can be paid in up to eight monthly instalments.

Schools and colleges have discretionary bursary funds and may be able to assist. You will need to discuss this directly with your child’s school or college.

The authority has the discretion to waiver the financial contribution charge if exceptional circumstances apply that would make application of the charge inappropriate. As a discount for low income is applied and there is the option to pay by instalments it is unlikely that low income alone would be considered exceptional.

In the event of long term sickness school absence meaning that transport for which a financial contribution is charged is not going to be used parents should contact the transport team to discuss their options in regard to the charge. The absence would need to be expected to be of a least 4 weeks consecutive duration (not including school holidays) and supported by medical evidence which verifies why school attendance would not be possible during this time.

Financial contributions towards transport arranged part way through a school year would be charged for accordingly

### Bursary Funds

The 16 - 19 Bursary Funds provides financial support to young people to help overcome specific barriers and help them stay in education.

There are eligibly criteria that have to be met to apply for funding from the Bursary Funds, more information on bursary funds can be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund)

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing bursary funds. Young people who want to apply should contact their school or college to make an application.

## Young People aged 19+

* You may make an application for travel assistance if you have an address in Stoke-on-Trent as your principal residence and you satisfy all the following criteria ;
* Are aged 19 to 25 when the academic year for the course starts
* Have an EHC plan or SEND
* Are starting a new course for a higher level qualification than you have studied before
* Attending a full time course (3 full days or more per week)
* Attend the nearest suitable school, college or training provider that offers the qualification or course
* Live more than 3 miles away from the education provider, or are unable to travel this distance because of your SEND (you will need to provide evidence of this)
* Attend college during the normal school or college day during term time only
* Are unable to travel to school or college without help and no support is available from people in your household, other family members or a personal assistant (if you have one)

You must complete the travel assessment application form to apply for travel assistance. This should be completed and submitted before the end of May for courses to start in the next academic year unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Your application for travel assistance will be assessed and we will contact you within 4 weeks to let you know if travel assistance will be provided. If we provide you with travel assistance there shall be no charge .

If you do not qualify for free travel assistance you or your parent will need to arrange your own transport.

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| Summary  * Local Authorities are not obliged to provide travel assistance to young people over the age of 16 (after they have finished Y11) and under the age of 19 even if they are in full time education * Travel assistance can be provided at the discretion of the local authority, a financial contribution may be required for this * Travel assistance may be provided for young people aged 19+ |

# Section Eight: Independent Travel

As children become older and move to become more independent it is important to support that by encouraging more independent methods of travel.

Travel training provides tailored and practice help to support young people to walk, cycle or use public transport independently. Being able to travel independently is an important life skill and can open up opportunities for young people.

Travel training aims to provide young people with the skills and knowledge to be able to complete journeys safety, confidently and successfully.

Once a young person has successfully completed travel training the expectation is that they will use these new skills to travel more independently to school or college. Independent travel training needs to be tailored to the needs of the young person being supported and may last for as long or short a time as necessary.

Independent travel training does not remove your child's eligibly for travel assistance.

Elements of this will be considered as part of Preparation for Adulthood within the annual reviews for those that have an Education, Health & Care plan.

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| Summary  * Independent travel training can be provided for young people to increase their skills and confidence to travel on their own |

# Section Nine: Appeals and Complaints

## Complaints

If you are dissatisfied with a decision you may make a complaint which references the decision with which you are dissatisfied and why. For example, you may feel that you have not been treated fairly, that you have had to wait an unacceptable amount of time for a response or decision, or that information we have given to you is not correct.

If something has gone wrong we would welcome the opportunity to work with you and any other parties involved to understand what happened and what can be changed within limits of policy and statutory duty to improve practice in the future.

## Making a Complaint

If you feel that we have given you a poor service we ask that you tell the member of staff or their manager as this can be the quickest way to fix the problem and to learn from it. This won't be recorded as a formal complaint unless let us know that you would like it to be treated as one. You can find more information on making a complaint [here](https://www.stoke.gov.uk/downloads/file/531/complaints_comments_and_compliments_procedure)

### Stage One

You can make a complaint in person, by phone, by email or by completing the online form. We recommend making a complaint by email or completing the online form because it provides a written record

We will acknowledge that we have received your complaint within 2 working days and tell you who will be looking in to your complaint.

We aim to respond to all complaints within 10 working days. If your complaint is complicated we may need to take longer to respond but we will let you know when we will be able to respond.

### Stage Two

If you are not happy with the response to your complaint you can request that an officer, who shall not have been directly connected with the original decision or dealt with the compliant , investigate. You need to request this within 10 working days of receiving our response to the Stage One complaint and must do so in writing. You will need to tell us why you are unhappy with the response received and what outcome you would like from your complaint.

Stage Two reviews will be carried out by a Complaint Investigation Officer with a Senior Manager not involved in the original complaint.

We will acknowledge your complaint within 2 working days and respond within 20 working days.

### Appeal

In the case of an appeal you may be happy with how you have been treated and engaged with but you feel that the wrong decision has been made and you would like us to look at it again.

If you want to make an appeal about a decision made regarding your child's home to school travel assistance you need to do so within 20 working days of the decision and / or the method of travel assistance that will be provided.

When you complete the appeals form please tell us why you are dissatisfied with the decision and provide any additional information that may not have been considered when the original decision was made.

If as part of your stage 2 appeal you would like to attend the appeal meeting to tell us about the circumstances and grounds for your appeal please let us know so that we can arrange for you to do so

## Reasons for Appealing:

* The eligibly decision is incorrect
* The method of travel assistance offered is not appropriate

There is a two-stage process for considering Appeals.

## Stage One: Review by Officer

This appeal stage investigates whether the original decision was made correctly considering all the information provided and also considers any additional information provided as part of the stage one appeal.

The appeal will be considered by an officer who was not involved in the original decision and overseen by a manager who also was not involved in the original decision

We have 20 working days to consider the Stage One Appeal.

Once considered we will write to you and let you know

* What decision has been made about eligibility and travel assistance type, and the next steps if your appeal has been successful
* Any other departments or agencies that were involved in the decision
* Why we have made the decision
* The factors we considered in making the decision
* How we made the decision
* What to do if you are not happy with the decision (Stage Two)

## Stage Two: Review by an independent appeal panel

You have 20 working days from being contacted with the outcome of your Stage One appeal to make a Stage Two application. You must request that your appeal moves to Stage Two in writing.

The officers who carry out the review will not have been involved in the original decision or in the Stage One Appeal. They will still be officers from Stoke-on-Trent City Council and will have the relevant knowledge and experience to understand the information presented and the impact of their decision. At least one officer involved in the review must be a Strategic Manager or senior, and a minimum of two officers must be involved in the review.

We have 40 working days from when we receive your written notification to consider the Stage Two Appeal.

Once considered we will write to you and let you know

* What decision has been made about eligibility and travel assistance type, and the next steps if your appeal has been successful.
* What we considered when making the decision.
* The departments or agencies that were involved in the decision.
* Why we have made the decision.
* How we made the decision.
* What to do if you are still dissatisfied with the decision (Local Government Ombudsman).

## Local Government Ombudsman

You have the right to take your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if you think that a decision has not been made following the correct process or if you think that we have not managed your appeal correctly.

If you think that we have not complied with the law in respect of the decision, the manner in which a decision was made or any aspect of the appeal process you may apply to have a Judicial Review.

# Section Ten: Responsibilities

## Parents

At all times parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time, including whilst they are waiting for a travel assistance assessment or appealing a decision. Parents are also responsible for the following :

* Ensuring that the school has up to date contact details including mobile phones and emergency contacts.
* Making sure your child is ready in time to be collected by transport whether from home or from a collection point, if this has been agreed. Transport cannot normally wait for children. If your child misses the transport you will need to arrange to take them to school.
* Making sure that someone is at home or at the drop off point to meet your child on return from school.
* Ensuring that your child understands how they need to behave on the journey to and from school
* Making your own travel arrangement for any other children for whom you are responsible, even if they attend the same school.
* Making your own travel arrangements for your child if they:
  + Finish school before normal departure time
  + Are taken ill at school and need to return home
  + Are unable to travel at the usual time (ie due to detention)
  + Are attending before or after school clubs
  + Need to attend a work experience placement
* Providing as much notice as possible if you move or your child changes school. You may need to make your own transport arrangements until your child's travel assistance eligibility is reassessed.
* If you move homes you will need to request another travel assistance assessment, the existing travel assistance provided may stop while your second request is considered.
* If your child moves school you will need to request another travel assistance assessment, the existing travel assistance provided may stop while your second request is considered.
* Providing any specialist equipment or safety equipment your child needs to travel safely.
* Notifying the 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 a financial contribution is required you are responsible for paying the contribution, in full before the end of May. If a financial contribution is expected you will receive an invoice from the Local Authority

### No one at home

It is expected that a parent or suitable adult will be ready at home or at the drop off point when the child returns from school if the travel assistance provided is by private coach, minibus or taxi.

If there is no one suitable at home the driver may take the child back to school or other suitable safe place as agreed with the Social Care Team.

Any additional costs as a result of this action may be passed on to the parents. All incidents will be recorded and if this happens frequently travel assistance may be stopped. The information may also be shared with social care teams for safeguarding reasons.

### Children and Young People

Children and young people are expected to conduct themselves appropriately whilst travelling.

* If provided with a public bus pass to carry it with them and show it to the driver or other official if asked.
* If traveling on public transport to arrive at the bus stop in good time to catch the bus and complete the journey to school and home.
* If provided with a public bus pass to only use it on the bus or route appropriate for the home to school journey and only on the days which they attend school.
* Conduct themselves in a safe and responsible way at all times on any vehicle in which they are travelling whether is it a public transport bus or private coach, minibus or taxi.
* Travel on the correct vehicle.
* Follow instructions from the driver or other official at all times.
* Wear seatbelts at all times when available.
* Get off the transport safely, at the right stop and cross roads carefully with support if appropriate (following any instruction).

If behaviour on transport does not meet reasonable standards, considering the child’s age and abilities, then travel assistance may be withdrawn. If travel assistance is withdrawn for poor behaviour the local authority is not obliged to provide any further travel assistance.