

# Surrey County Council



## Under 16's Travel Assistance Policy



# Introduction

This document sets out our Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy and describes how the Council fulfils its duties and exercises its discretionary powers as required by the Education Act 1996 and subsequent legislation and guidance.

The policy explains the criteria for eligibility for travel assistance for pupils to their school or college for children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years old). It describes how parents and carers can apply for travel assistance and how decisions are made. It sets out how parents and carers may appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy.

For updates relating to operational decisions and information regarding application timescales, please visit our main [School and college travel help - Surrey County Council](#)

## Policy statement

Surrey County Council is committed to ensuring that all pupils have a great start to life, are safe and healthy and have access to high quality education so that they can achieve their full potential. The Children and Families Act 2014 commits partners to work together to develop services which strengthen the abilities and resilience of children and their families to be independent.

The Council is also committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In many cases, this will mean that pupils can walk or cycle to school with their parents or carers. This policy sets out how we will help the small number of pupils who find it difficult to travel to school or college without some assistance.

As a Council we want to make sure we continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities for home to school travel assistance to meet the travel needs of children and young people, enabling them to access their place of education. The Council acknowledges that without this service some of the County's children and young people would be unable to access their school or college, especially those who have significant additional needs, are isolated within the community, or deemed extremely vulnerable.

Engagement with young people with special educational needs in Surrey confirmed that young people value independence highly, and that they want their parents, schools and the services that support them to help them prepare for adulthood, including continued access to education, employment opportunities and access to essential services and activities in the community. The ability to travel independently is important to them now to attend school, participate in community life and socialise with friends; it is also fundamental to their future ambitions.

We want to support parents and carers to fulfil their responsibility to ensure their school-aged children attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school. Those children and young people not in receipt of travel assistance from the Council can use a wide range of forms of travel in Surrey, accompanied as necessary, including bus, train, concessionary fares, walking and cycling. We also want to support schools to promote safe routes to school and safe travel skills through their regular curriculum.

The council is also committed to reducing emissions and improving Air Quality, to improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable residents. Please see our [Climate Change Strategy](#) for more information.

This home to school travel assistance policy sets out travel assistance options which may be employed to assist eligible children and young people, please note that references to transport within this document are related to travel assistance.

Travel assistance may take one of the following forms:

- Provision of a bus or train pass
- Training to cycle independently (reimbursement of bicycle and safety equipment) subject to the agreement of parent/carer
- Personal Travel Budget
- Reimbursing of mileage costs for parents or carers
- Provision of a private bus, coach, or minibus
- Provision of taxis

## Eligibility

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their statutory school-aged children (age 5 to 16) attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school.

A child becomes of compulsory school age at the start of term after their fifth birthday and ceases to be on the last day of the academic year, in which they

are in year 11. This applies to both children with and without an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

There are four core categories of eligible children set out in law:

- Children living beyond the statutory walking distance from school
- Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to unsafe walking routes
- Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems.
- Children from low-income families who have extended rights to travel assistance to a choice of schools.

You can use our [online home to school eligibility assessment checker](#) to see if you would be eligible.

Ordinarily and in accordance with the Council's statutory duty, children under the age of 5 will not be eligible for travel assistance between their home and school. Where circumstances exist where the Council determines that travel assistance is necessary it may exceptionally apply its discretionary powers on a case -by-case basis.

Your nearest available school, is defined as the school that is closest to your home as measured by walking route or, where all schools in question are over the statutory walking distance, measured by road route, that could have offered a place to your child on National Offer Day (for the relevant year), at the time of a Key Stage change, during a house move, or when seeking an alternative school place.

If you live near a county border, your nearest school may be in a neighbouring county. If you apply to a school that is not your nearest, you will need to show that you tried to get a place at closer schools and were refused.

For pupils in year 12 and above (post 16 year olds), there is no statutory requirement on the Council to provide free transport to their school or college. The Council must decide and set out in a policy statement the arrangements that the Council considers necessary to facilitate attendance.

It is expected that young people in Post 16 education will use existing travel schemes to support access to their education placement. More information about existing schemes and discretionary support provided by the Council can be found in [Travel Assistance Policy for learners aged 16 to 25 - Surrey County Council](#) which is updated each year.

# Statutory walking distances

Surrey County Council, in accordance with its statutory duty, will provide free home to school travel assistance for children of compulsory school age to the nearest available school from their home address who meet the 'qualifying distance' criteria which are:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of 8, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school
- 3 miles or more for children aged 8 and above, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school.

Distances will be measured from the address point of the pupil's house, to either the nearest school gate available for pupils to use when measuring to a Surrey school, or the address point of the school property when measuring to a school outside Surrey.

If the child/family qualify for free school meals or they are in receipt of maximum Universal Credit, then please refer to our section on extended rights.

From September 2026, the UK Government is expanding eligibility for free school meals to all children in households receiving Universal Credit, removing the previous income cap of £7,400. This change means:

- Families on Universal Credit will automatically qualify for free school meals.

## How distances are measured

Walking distances are calculated using the shortest available walking route from the home address to school. If families believe that the walking route measured is not available to walk, they should request a review of the route. The legal definition of an 'available walking route' is a route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school.

When determining which is the nearest qualifying school to the home address for travel assistance, distances will be measured via walking route. In line with Department for Education guidance, distances greater than the walking distance will be measured by shortest road route.

Children who live between 2 and 3 miles from their school will cease to be eligible for travel assistance from the start of the term following their eighth birthday.

When a child cannot be offered a place at the nearest school to the home address, the Council will, subject to the criteria set within this policy and the qualifying distance being met, provide transport to the next nearest school with space to admit. For transport to be provided in this instance the parent must provide evidence that they have applied for and been refused a place at the school which is the nearest school for their home address and any other schools closer than the school offering admission.

If the child/family qualify for free school meals or they are in receipt of maximum Universal Credit, then please refer to section on extended rights.

## **Children with special educational needs or disabilities**

For children with special needs or a disability or mobility problems if it is deemed unreasonable to expect them to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then the distance criteria does not apply and they are eligible for free school travel assistance regardless of the distance they live from school. Cases with such circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## **Unsafe walking routes**

Where a child is not deemed eligible for travel assistance to their nearest qualifying school because it is under the relevant distance threshold and the parent/carer believes the child is unable to walk the assessed route safely (accompanied by an adult as necessary) due to the nature of the route, they should explain the concern within the application or via the appeals process outlining the aspect of the route they believe to be unsafe. Safety of route concerns will not be considered if the child is not attending their nearest available or qualifying school.

Walking routes are then inspected by the Council's Safer Travel Team using the 'Road Safety Great Britain (GB) Guidelines on Assessment of Walked Routes to School'. If the route is agreed to be unsafe an alternative safe route will be measured and if the child is then beyond the statutory walking distance, he/she will be eligible for free travel assistance.

Parent and carer working patterns or having children attending different schools are not typically considered valid reasons for being unable to accompany a child. These situations are common among many parents, and

it is generally expected that parents will make appropriate arrangements to meet their various responsibilities.

Where a new route previously considered to be unavailable becomes available (for example through the provision of a new footpath), or a new route is found that was not previously known to exist, travel assistance will no longer be provided to any new applicants. Those applicants who have been eligible for travel assistance due to an unavailable route that has become available or a new route found, will be written to with an explanation of the change and provided with assistance for 4 weeks, or to the end of the half-term whichever is longer, after a route is re-assessed before travel assistance will be withdrawn. A parent and or carer will be able to appeal against the decision to withdraw assistance in these circumstances.

## Extended rights

Statutory entitlement is extended for children from low-income groups. Children from low-income groups are defined as those who are eligible for free school meals, or those families who are in receipt of the maximum Universal Credit. Parents must provide supporting evidence regarding their Universal Credit payment.

Children above the age of 8, but under the age of 11, from low-income families will be eligible for travel assistance to their nearest suitable school if the shortest walking distance between their home and the school is more than 2 miles.

Children aged 11 and over (years 7 to 11) from low-income families will be eligible for travel assistance if they attend a school which is more than two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) and less than 6 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their home and the school attended is one of the three nearest suitable schools to their home.

Children aged 11 and over (years 7 to 11) from low-income families who are attending their nearest designated faith school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will also be eligible for travel assistance if their school is more than two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) but not more than 15 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their home.

When considering whether a faith school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, Surrey County Council will consider the nature of other schools that may have been named as higher preferences on the application form. For an application for travel assistance to be agreed under this section, the expectation will be that the school that is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will be named above any non-faith schools that have been named on the application form.

Parents must provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief, and this will normally be confirmed by asking their minister of religion to sign the application form.

# Special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems

Where a child with special education needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other three eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then an assessment based on their individual needs and circumstances will be undertaken.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk between home and school, the Council will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent or carer can reasonably be expected to accompany their child. Ordinarily, the expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent or carer, work commitments and other care will not be considered.

When assessing entitlement for travel assistance for a child with SEND or mobility problems, the Council will consider the individual needs of each child. This may include taking professional advice from educational psychologists, medical officers and teachers and consulting with parents and carers before arriving at a final decision.

Consideration will also be given to the child's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have.

The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing transport entitlement:

- the age of the child
- the distance of the child from school
- whether the child is physically able to walk the journey to school accompanied as necessary
- whether the walking route is appropriate for the pupil and their specific needs and allows them to arrive in a fit state to be educated
- whether a child's emotional and behavioural difficulties will create a clear health and safety hazard to themselves or others on the journey to school

- the SEND of the child
- any other individual circumstance.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not presented in any order and is for guidance only. Meeting one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a child with SEND to transport assistance.

The fact that a child has an EHCP or attends a special school does not automatically entitle him or her to travel assistance.

Other family circumstances, such as parents and carers attending work or looking after other children, cannot be considered when determining eligibility

## **Children attending schools on grounds of religion or belief**

Ordinarily assistance with travel to a faith school will only be provided if it is the nearest qualifying school. If parental preference results in children's attendance at a faith school when there are suitable schools nearer to home, then no travel assistance will normally be provided. However, if children meet the Extended Rights eligibility category criteria, then travel assistance to a faith school which is not the nearest suitable school may be considered (see section 3.4 for more details).

Under Extended Rights, when considering whether a faith school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, Surrey County Council will consider the nature of other schools that may have been named as higher preferences on the application form. For an application for travel assistance to be agreed under this condition, the expectation will be that the school that is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will be named above any non-faith schools that have been named on the application form.

When applying under Extended Rights for travel to a faith school, parents must provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief, and this will normally be confirmed by asking their minister of religion to sign the application form.

# Exceptional circumstances

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out parental duty, with the overriding expectation that parents should undertake their legal responsibility to get their child(ren) to and from school and as such the Council will need to be satisfied that the parent has demonstrated why they, for social, medical, financial, or personal reasons cannot undertake this duty.

Recognising that the Council's discretionary powers should not be unreasonably restricted by its general policy, the Council will consider and may agree requests for home to school transport where there are considered to be extenuating circumstances that prevent a child accessing their school unless travel assistance is put in place. If the parent believes exceptional circumstances exist and assistance with travel is demonstrated as necessary, then a transport application form must be completed and submitted with all relevant information and evidence for consideration.

The determination will be based on evidence received to support the case whether transport is necessary for the child to receive an education. Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances could have reasonably been foreseen by the parent/carer. For example, moving to temporary accommodation owing to flood damage cannot be foreseen, whereas choosing a school other than a child's nearest school and realising following this decision that transport is not available could be foreseen.

Where it is decided that a child does not qualify for assistance with travel based on the presented needs/circumstances then it remains solely the parent/ carer's responsibility to ensure school attendance or consider transferring the child to a more local school.

In all cases the decision whether to exercise discretion will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

## Military families

When assessing eligibility for military families the [Arms forces Covenant Duty](#) will be considered. In all cases the decision whether to exercise discretion will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

## Children below the Age of 5

The Council does not have a legal obligation to provide travel arrangements for children under the age of 5 to travel between home and school. While Surrey County Council has the discretionary power to offer Travel Assistance

for children aged four entering reception year at primary school, this is not a standard practice and is only considered in exceptional cases.

# Appeals

Parents and carers of children who live in Surrey and who wish to appeal a decision regarding one of the following, may apply for their case to be considered at a stage one appeal in relation to any of the following:

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

During an appeal about an application for travel assistance, travel assistance will not be provided to the child/young person unless the appeal concerns the travel arrangements offered, in which case the offered arrangements will be available pending the appeal decision. Where the appeal concerns a change to existing travel arrangements, then the previously agreed travel arrangements will continue until the review is complete.

If an appeal concerns the safety of route, please note that the Council will not consider further appeals on this matter. However, you may appeal if you believe there are exceptional circumstances that prevent you or your child from walking the route.

## **Stage One Appeal: Case review by an officer**

Parents and carers must complete a stage one appeal form on which they must indicate whether they believe the original decision to be wrong or whether they wish their case to be considered as an exception to the policy. The form must be submitted with details of the case within 20 working days from receipt of the original transport decision.

The request should detail why the parent/carer believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/ or family circumstances they believe should be considered.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the request a senior officer, who was not involved with making the original decision, will review the case. More complex cases may sometimes exceed the 20-working day turnaround time for review.

The senior officer will write to the parent/carer, normally within five working days of the review, setting out:

- 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 how the parent/carer can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

Where possible, applications for review at stage one of the review process should be accompanied by independent supporting evidence such as from a GP or consultant, a social worker, the police, other local authority officers and copies of relevant court orders as appropriate.

Except for eligibility based on extended entitlement for families on low income, qualification for travel assistance is not means- tested, and family income will not normally be given special consideration under this review process.

When considering appeals, the following will also not normally be taken into account:

- Parent/carers' work or other commitments
- Attendance by siblings at other schools
- An address other than the home address, including a childminder's address
- Ad hoc visits to other establishments or locations
- Out of hours clubs (for example breakfast club or after school activities).

## **Stage Two Appeal: review by an independent panel**

If the parent or carer remains unhappy with the decision at stage one of the appeal, they can complete a 'stage two appeal form' to request that their case is escalated for consideration by an independent panel.

The independent appeal panel will be independent of the original and stage one decision-making process (but are not required to be independent of the local authority) and suitably experienced. Panel members may include officers of the local authority along with Surrey county councillors. Including officers on independent panels will strengthen the experience and knowledge of the panel and allow appeals to be heard more rapidly as there will be a

larger number of panel members to draw on. County councillors will continue to be part of appeal hearings.

Requests for a stage two appeal must be made within 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision.

Stage two appeals will normally be considered within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carers request for it to be escalated. Any additional supporting documents should be submitted alongside the Stage Two form supplied by the parent at least 10 working days prior to the review hearing date. A copy of the paperwork that has been submitted to the stage two appeal panel will be sent to the parent at least seven working days prior to the review.

The parent/carer will be asked to indicate on the 'stage two appeal form' whether they wish to attend the appeal to present their case verbally. An officer for the local authority will also be invited to present the local authority's case. Parent/carers are not required to attend and if they do not indicate that they wish to attend, the review will be scheduled to be heard in their absence.

The stage two appeal panel will give equal consideration to all case reviews whether conducted in the presence of all parties or heard in the absence of one/both parties. If the panel considers that further information is required, the case will be adjourned so that the information can be made available.

The clerk at the stage two appeal will write to the parent/carer, normally within five to ten working days of the review, setting out:

- 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 parent/carer's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

## Local Government Ombudsman

You can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) if you think we did not follow the correct process or if something went wrong during the review.

For more information, visit the [Local Government Ombudsman website](#). You can also [contact the LGO](#).

You can apply for judicial review if you think the independent panel's decision is legally flawed.

# Travel assistance options

## Forms of travel assistance

The Council will review the travel needs of all eligible children and decide the most appropriate form of assistance that will be provided. The form of travel assistance offered will reflect the most appropriate use of public funds to ensure cost effective provision is in place, while also ensuring that any agreed specific requirements, such as medical/ mobility or health needs are also taken into account where necessary.

Where a child is eligible for travel assistance, the following types of assistance may be offered:

- Personal Travel Budget (PTB)
- Bus pass
- Train pass
- Training to cycle independently (reimbursement of bicycle and safety equipment), subject to agreement by parent/carer
- Reimbursing of mileage costs for parents or carers who are able and willing to take their child to school
- Provision of a private bus, coach, or minibus
- Provision of taxis or licensed private hire car (in extenuating circumstances)
- Shared contract transport vehicle (coach, minibus, taxi) using collection point
- Shared contract transport vehicle (coach, minibus, taxi) using home collection
- Other bespoke travel options that enable travel and the development of travel skills and independence like a Travel Buddy.

Where a Surrey travel pass is not appropriate, such as where a child is travelling to an out of County school, parents can claim for reimbursement of the cost for their child to travel to school by bus or train. Parents will be asked to submit a claim form at the end of each term and evidence of the cost of the tickets purchased must be submitted. The refund will be for the lowest equivalent public transport rate between the pupil's home and the school.

## Journey times

The nature of transport congestion in Surrey and the very long distances of many journeys means that travelling times can vary greatly. It is expected that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn. Journey times should reflect this. Government guidance is that best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes. In some journeys, the upper limit on planned journey times may be exceeded and in planning routes, the maximum time recommendations of 45 minutes for primary school children and 75 minutes for secondary school children will not be the overriding consideration. This would allow children and young people who could potentially share transport to do so.

However, if the Council departs from the national guidelines on journey times, it will ensure the planned route is not of such duration that the pupil is unable, because of stress or strain, to learn properly (whether at school or at home). The Council will take into consideration the pupil's age and stage of development. The 45-minute maximum planned journey time for primary-aged pupils contained in national guidance will be maintained and only exceeded in certain circumstances, such as journeys which enable a child to attend the setting which best meets their needs.

## **Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs)**

Parents / Carers can apply for a PTB for all children and young people who are eligible. This can be awarded at the discretion of the Council and is a sum of money to support the pupil to travel from home to their school or educational setting.

A PTB is paid on the assumption that a pupil of statutory school age attends their school/educational setting 190 days a year (as determined by the government definition of a school year)

If a pupil or student receives a PTB part way through the school year, or attends school or learning on a part-time basis, the total payment would be on a pro rata basis to account for the reduced amount of time that a parent/carer would be responsible for travel arrangements.

## **What is a Personal Travel Budget?**

A PTB allows families to have the freedom and flexibility to make their own travel arrangements rather than travelling on Council organised transport. A PTB can be awarded at the discretion of the Council. It is a sum of money to support the student to travel from home to their school or educational setting. It is not a short-term alternative while a transport application is being processed.

A PTB could be used in many ways, including:

- To pay for fuel and/or running costs on a family vehicle that is used to transport a student to school/educational setting.
- To lease a vehicle to use if the family don't have one.
- Paying for a shared taxi with other pupils.
- Paying for another person to take a sibling to school to free a parent/carer up to transport the pupil with SEND.
- buying travel passes for other children in the family so that they can travel to and from school, allowing the parent/carer to transport the pupil with SEND.
- Paying for childcare for another child to allow a parent/carer to take the pupil with SEND to school/educational setting.
- Working with the school to join up transport options with other parents (for example car share), encouraging a sense of community.

All eligible students requesting a PTB will have their application assessed. We will take into consideration any cost to the Council of arranging the transport and will make a best value assessment based on the specific needs of the student.

## **Conditions of use for Personal Travel Budgets**

If a parent/carer uses the PTB to employ someone (for example for childcare), then they will be responsible for complying with relevant rules regarding Tax and National Insurance, Employment Law, Insurance, Health and Safety or any other relevant rules or legislation in force at that time. In addition, it is good practice for parents/carers to make relevant and appropriate checks on whether employed staff have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates; and that parents/carers arrange or pay for those checks if directly employing an individual who doesn't have one.

Similarly, if a parent/carer uses the PTB to enter into contracts with organisations for example after school/extra-curricular clubs, or individuals, the parent/carer would be responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of those contracts. This may include payment arrangements or notice of cancellation.

PTBs cannot be used in the following circumstances:

- To buy or utilise space on transport services from the Council.
- For any purpose that does not enable the pupil to travel to/from the school/educational setting.
- To travel to activities other than the educational setting, for example work experience.
- For any activity that is illegal, unlawful, or unsafe.

- For other purposes that may bring the Council into disrepute.

To apply for a PTB the student will need to:

- live within the area where Surrey is the local council, and
- comply with the eligibility criteria described in section 3.

All children in the same family would be considered when agreeing the amount awarded via a PTB. There may be some circumstances where it is appropriate for a family to have one child travelling on Council arranged transport (and paying an annual fee), while the other child has a PTB. Where this is an appropriate arrangement, this would be discussed with the family.

Appropriate checks will be carried out at set intervals and at a proportionate level to ensure that PTBs are used appropriately, in accordance with the Council's quality assurance protocol for PTBs.

A PTB may be withdrawn in some circumstances or a reduction in the payment amounts made, including if:

- a pupil's attendance falls below 80%, it would be recognised that attendance for some pupils may be affected by their medical needs and this will be taken into consideration in determining whether to withdraw, reduce or reclaim a PTB.
- a pupil regularly arrives late at school in the mornings or in an unfit state to learn.
- if it becomes evident that a PTB is not being used appropriately.
- it is not cost-effective for the Council to continue providing the PTB.
- it has been assessed that the pupil is no longer eligible for travel assistance.
- there is a change to national legislation and/or the Council's policies.

## **Agreeing the amount of Personal Travel Budgets**

The following factors will be taken into consideration alongside discussion with the family, to determine the appropriate personal budget amount:

- The special educational needs and disabilities of the pupil.
- The travel distance.
- How the pupil might travel to school.
- The time the journey takes.
- Whether the pupil is able to travel alone or if they need to be accompanied.
- The age of the pupil.
- Whether any specialist equipment might be required.

The standard amount that would be awarded with a PTB is 45p per mile. The cost of 2 return journeys per day of attendance at school (i.e. all 4 legs of the journeys) would be included in the PTB amount. Any variation to the standard amount will be considered as part of the pupil's travel assessment.

There might be circumstances where a PTB is not appropriate. This could include where the Council can arrange transport at a lower cost. This will be assessed as part of the application process. The Council will make the final decision based on all the available information.

## Mileage allowance

Personal Travel Budgets have replaced Independent Travel Allowances (ITAs) for pupils under 16 and Post 16 Bursaries. However, there may be exceptional extenuating circumstances where a mileage allowance could be offered on a temporary basis.

## Collection points

Collection points are similar to bus stops, where the Council identifies designated pick-up and drop-off locations for the pupil to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils and supports children and young people to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.

The Council will assess individual needs to determine suitability of routes for collection points. In most cases, collection points will be considered for children attending mainstream settings. Where a route has been identified as suitable for collection points to be introduced, the Council will consult with the parents and carers of children already on those routes over a four-week period on the introduction of a collection point and to ensure that the proposed arrangements are appropriate; for example, the location of the collection point, which should be no more than a maximum of one mile from the home. The Council will also ensure that it is aware of any individual circumstances which may mean that a collection point is not appropriate for a pupil or pupils on that route due for example to their additional needs.

Achieving this level of independence will not be possible for some children and young people with the most complex SEND needs, and in some cases parents' own mobility or disability may impact on them being able to accompany their child to a collection point. Where this is the case, the ambition for the service is to improve the range of options available for families to take responsibility for their own children's transport where this is

desired and appropriate. In such circumstances, the Council will carefully consider and assess the individual child's needs as well as the mobility and or disability of their parents.

Following a decision to introduce a collection point, the Council will provide not less than 6 weeks notification to families (which includes any school holidays that fall in the 6-week period) before the collection point is established. If a collection point is implemented, parents and carers who disagree that the transport offer is suitable for their child will be able to appeal.

Where a collection point is allocated, it is the parent's or carer's responsibility to make sure that their child travels to and from the collection point and transfers to and from the vehicle safely.

For parents who are temporarily unable to take their child to a collection point, no temporary assistance will be provided in those circumstances. This is because the child's special educational need or disability has not changed and the transport service from the collection point is available.

All collection points will be assessed in advanced for their suitability.

- Wherever a bus stop can be legally used as a collection point, it will be
- Minibuses can stop to collect and drop off on yellow and double yellow lines; vehicles cannot stop on red routes, white zig zags (near a zebra crossing) or school keep-clear hatchings
- The driver always plans not to cause obstructions to other road users while making a drop off or collection and will try to stop in parking areas or bays
- Collections or drop-off are always made kerb side
- Each collection point is physically assessed before being used in service; a driver will go out and access to see if the location is safe (for example, a well-lit public location, not too close to a junction or on the brow of a hill)
- The drivers complete dynamic risk assessments at the time of collections or / drop offs in the eventuality of any changes (new road layouts, another road user in the stopping space) and will slightly adjust the collection point if it is unsafe to stop.

## Concessionary seats

The Council provides transport for children who have a statutory entitlement to free home to school transport, where it is best value to use this mode of transport. If there are any spare seats available on these routes, they are available for purchase by pupils who do not meet the statutory entitlement

criteria. Spare seats will be allocated on an annual basis; however, a seat may be withdrawn at any time at short notice if it is required by a pupil with a statutory entitlement to transport. Places are offered according to published criteria available on our [Buy a spare seat on school transport - Surrey County Council](#)

All vehicles used must be Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) compliant. This requirement has significantly reduced the availability of suitable vehicles in the coach market, which may limit the number of spare seats available.

Parents and carers cannot appeal if a spare seat is not available on a particular route.

# Transport Standards

This section sets out some of the operational standards that we will follow in delivering our statutory responsibilities for home to school transport. We want to make this transparent for all parents and carers so that they understand how the service operates.

We review routes constantly and offer travel support that suits the needs of the pupils in the most cost-effective way possible. This may mean that the Council may make changes to travel support and this will be discussed with the family.

## **Provision of contracted transport vehicles (coaches, buses, minibuses, and taxis)**

When a child is eligible for home to school transport under the Council's policy, the Council will provide suitable transport and seek to ensure this is cost effective. The transport provided may take the form of a bus pass, train pass, seat on a contract vehicle, for instance a hired coach, a minibus or shared taxi. A travel allowance can also be provided for children when requested by parents or carers and where it is more cost effective.

## **Provision of transport for part-time hours**

Home to school travel assistance will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of transport for part-time hours, induction days and enrolment days does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided.

Schools and parents and carers should take this into account when bespoke hours are being set for a child. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

However, where extenuating circumstances can be evidenced to show that a child with an EHCP is receiving education on a part time basis in school then the Council may provide travel assistance until the child is reintegrated into full time school attendance if a reintegration plan can be provided outlining the child's return to full time education.

## **Provision of transport for after school and non-educational activities**

In accordance with statutory guidance, travel assistance will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of travel assistance for non-statutory education or clubs does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided. Parents are expected to make travel arrangements for their children in these circumstances. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

## **Home address and house moves**

In accordance with statutory guidance, travel assistance will only be provided from and to a single address at which the child or young person is habitually and normally resident. Where a child splits their time equally between addresses, travel assistance will be assessed from the address which is registered with the school as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant school admission application form.

## **For children without an EHCP**

Assistance with travel will not normally be agreed to a child's existing school if a house-move results in the child living beyond the statutory walking distance from school but there are other nearer schools with an available place.

However, assistance may be agreed if the child is in years 6, 10 or 11 at the time of the move and if there are extenuating circumstances that the Council deem sufficient to provide assistance on a discretionary basis. Where parents wish their case to be considered on this basis, they should provide details along with independent evidence of their case.

Assistance with travel may also be agreed even if the school attended is not the nearest suitable with places in certain circumstances. If the move is an enforced temporary council move within Surrey that is anticipated to last less than 6 months or where a parent has moved to a refuge in Surrey, and the distance from home to school meets the agreed criteria, assistance with travel may be considered. Evidence of an enforced temporary council move/move to a refuge must be provided. Travel assistance agreed under this provision may only be agreed for a fixed period and will be subject to periodic review.

## **For children with an EHCP**

If a child with an EHCP moves address, the SEND team will review the plan to consider if the school being attended is still the nearest suitable school that can meet the child's needs. If it is, and the child continues to meet the criteria to be eligible for travel assistance then assistance will be offered from the new address.

## **Pick up and drop off timing**

Routes to and from school and pick-up and drop-off times are planned by the transport provider to be as efficient as possible for all students travelling on the vehicle. Because of this, it is not possible to accommodate the individual circumstances of each family, such as work commitments or taking other children to and from school. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

## **Dual and link placements, inclusion, and pupil referral units**

Dual placements are where a child or young person attends more than one school or where a school arranges a college link placement for a pupil. Dual placements may require additional travel assistance, such as transport at earlier or later times of the school day. Schools are responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of such transport. Where a pupil is on the roll at one school but visits another school for inclusion or link purposes, the school where the pupil is usually based will be responsible for arranging and paying for transport. These arrangements also apply to pupil referral units.

Where a school has more than one site, travel assistance will only be offered to the site at which the placement was agreed by the SEND team.

## **Children attending residential placements**

Children who attend a residential school that has been named in their EHCP as their nearest suitable school will be eligible for travel assistance to take them to and from school as follows:

- Weekly/Fortnightly boarding placements – travel assistance will be provided to for children to travel to school on a Sunday evening/Monday morning, as directed by the school, and to travel home at the end of each week/fortnight, or earlier as directed by the school for unplanned or planned earlier closures
- Termly residential placements – travel assistance will be provided for 12 single journeys to cover travel home at the start and end of each term and half term
- Permanent (52 week) residential placements – travel assistance will be provided for 12 single journeys each academic year. These are at the discretion of the parent and school but, where contracted transport is needed, this needs to be booked at least 10 days in advance through Surrey's Transport Coordination Centre
- Any additional trips will be the responsibility of the parent.

## **Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) and Alternative Provision for children and young people with additional needs and disability**

### **Education other than at School (EOTAS)**

If a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) names "EOTAS" in section F, or if the Council has agreed EOTAS provision pending update of an EHCP, there is no statutory duty to provide transport

Travel assistance will be considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the child's individual circumstances and the nature of the provision.

As part of the decision-making process, the Local Authority's SEND team will discuss with the family how the child will access their EOTAS provision, including any travel-related considerations. This ensures that practical arrangements are explored, and support is aligned with the child's needs.

### **Alternative Provision (AP)**

A child may be eligible for free travel to a place that isn't a qualifying school: where they receive education at a place other than a school by virtue of arrangements made under section 19 (1) of the Education Act 1996

## **Passenger assistants**

Passenger assistants (escorts) are not automatically provided. In considering whether a route needs a passenger assistant, the Council generally takes account of the following:

- A child's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required
- Where an individual child's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle
- Where the number of children travelling together necessitates the provision of a passenger assistant to help manage a group children and their specific support needs on the journey.

Passenger assistants for SEND purposes are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Provision of a passenger assistant at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement; the requirement can be reassessed at any time in the academic year, and in the event of any change in circumstances.

## **Medication and health interventions**

All Passenger Assistants have received accredited emergency first aid training.

Although there is no statutory duty for transport staff to administer medication, they are expected to ensure the health and safety of all pupils in their care. First aid training includes: managing the symptoms of shock, dealing with an unconscious casualty, cardiac arrest, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, choking, and seizures.

The emergency services can advise members of transport staff about the closest automated external defibrillator for use in treating a patient in cardiac arrest.

Operators will ensure that every driver and passenger assistant is able to respond to an emergency, however, they will not normally be expected to administer medical assistance. Every parent, as part of their application, is required to provide detailed information directly to the Travel Assistance Team about their child's SEND and/or medical needs.

This information forms the basis of the pupil's transport plan. In some cases, where a child has very specific and complex needs, an additional care plan from medical professionals may be required. A needs assessment will be undertaken to ensure the correct level of medical support can be arranged and where it is deemed to be unsafe for a pupil with complex or acute medical needs to travel with only a passenger assistant, Surrey will seek to secure a medically trained professional from our colleagues in Health to accompany the pupil on the vehicle and meet their healthcare needs. For clarity these professionals will not be considered as a passenger assistant or transport staff, they will be considered as specialist 1:1 health support separate from travel assistance provision.

Members of transport staff are not permitted to administer medication or to replace medical accessories (for example, gastrostomy or tracheotomy tubes) on board a vehicle. The exception to these are pre-loaded EpiPens® or pre-loaded buccal midazolam devices as these are loaded with the correct dosage of medication and do not require members of transport staff to accurately measure medication within a confined and possibly moving space. This can only be done with prior agreement from Surrey and the appropriate training having been completed.

Medication can be transported along with the pupil for use whilst they are at their destination, but this must be advised to the transport staff and advice should be sought from Surrey as to whether it requires a handover document to be signed.

In the event of an emergency on board a vehicle, the procedure is for the passenger assistant or driver to seek guidance from medical professionals by calling 999 and asking for a paramedic crew to attend the scene. It is for parents or carers to decide whether they wish for their child to travel on regular transport in these circumstances.

## Shared travel

Ordinarily children and young people travelling to and from school or college will be expected to share their transport with other children or young people. This promotes integration and independence, social skills as well as being

more sustainable and cost effective. Conversely, travelling on their own may lead to social isolation of a young person and a delay in development of essential social behaviours and skills. It also impacts on an individual's ability to access other forms of travel and to travel with others.

In developing a travel assistance policy with a focus on enabling independence and preparing for adulthood such as employment or shared living away from home, individual transport will only be agreed in extenuating circumstances. This would normally be linked to other medical needs or where the child or young person is receiving funded one-to-one support at their educational placement.

## **Behaviour of children on transport**

Children, parents, carers, schools, transport operators and the Council all have a role to play in promoting positive behaviour in children on school transport.

Assigned passenger assistants have a responsibility for safeguarding children and maintaining developmentally appropriate behavioural standards on the vehicle during the journey. Schools will take whatever steps possible to ensure the appropriate behaviour of their students on home to school transport; and will take appropriate action should incidents of poor behaviour be reported. Appropriate action may include the use of sanctions, written warnings, and exclusion from transport.

Parents are also expected to support their children using home to school transport and take responsibility for advising the Council or school of any distressed behaviours that may impact on the safety and wellbeing of their child or other transport users while travelling.

The Council recognises that all behaviour is communication, and distressed behaviour, not directly attributable to a child's particular special educational needs and circumstances, cannot be taken into account when determining an appropriate safe travel plan. The Council will expect clear standards of acceptable behaviour in the interests of ensuring a safe journey for all pupils and staff as well as other road users.

Reasonable adjustments will be made in cases where distressed behaviour persists, and it is deemed that this may impact the safety of the other passengers who may be endangered. Where reasonable adjustments cannot be made, or have been ineffective, transport can be withdrawn in individual cases and the Council will provide resources for parents to make alternative travel arrangements.

Pupils exhibiting distressed behaviour that cannot be improved through reasonable adjustments, will be subject to two written warnings issued by the Council. If a third warning is given, the transport offer will be reviewed and may be withdrawn. This action shall only be taken as a last resort and is for the safety of all concerned. In this instance the Council would provide a Personal Travel Budget instead.

In consultation with schools and parents/carers, the Council may instigate permanent or fixed periods of exclusion from transport. In this instance, parents or carers will be responsible for transporting their children during any period of exclusion and supporting their child's regular attendance at school.

The Council acknowledges and understands that all behaviour is communication and that some children with additional needs and disabilities may at times display distressed behaviour which means that they are unable to regulate themselves.

For children with an EHCP, parents or carers are asked to provide relevant information in their travel assistance application, of any behaviours that may impact on their child's and other transport users' safety, such as health care plans or advice from schools. Parents/carers should provide as much information as possible on how to support their child when displaying distressed behaviours and to identify potential triggers.

In some instances, the Council will undertake a needs assessment and will may consider making alternative arrangements, for example, providing the parent or carer with a mileage allowance or direct payments to make their child's own travel arrangements.

## **Offensive Weapons**

Children and young people are strictly prohibited from bringing any form of weapon onto any vehicle. Violation of this policy will result in permanent exclusion from travel assistance. Additionally, the Local Authority will report the incident to the police.

## **Drugs and alcohol**

Children and young people are strictly prohibited from bringing any form of drugs or alcohol onto any vehicle, except for prescribed medication. Violation of this policy will result in permanent exclusion from travel assistance. Any incident involving possession of illegal substances will be reported to the police.

## **Offensive language**

Offensive verbal abuse directed at staff, other passengers, or the public will not be tolerated. The Council reserves the right to withdraw transport services if deemed necessary. Offenders may be subject to a five-day exclusion from travel assistance.

## **Vandalism**

Any act of vandalism to the vehicle or another person's property will be investigated by the Council. Transport services may be withdrawn for an appropriate period of time, and the police may be involved in such instances.

## **Physical abuse**

Any act of physical abuse towards staff or children will be investigated by the Council. Transport services will be withdrawn for an appropriate period of time, and the police may be involved in such instances.

## **Procedure for withdrawal of travel arrangements**

Before a decision to withdraw travel arrangements is made, the child or young person and their carer will be given the opportunity to make representations to the Council. These representations must be in writing and submitted within a time limit specified by the Council. The Council will consult with the relevant school regarding the decision to withdraw travel arrangements. There is no statutory appeals process for the withdrawal of transport by the Council; however, the Council's complaints procedure is available to learners and parents.

## **Travel assistance agreed in error**

Travel assistance that has been agreed in error or as a result of incorrect, misleading, or fraudulent information, or as a result of an assessment error, will be withdrawn. Surrey County Council will seek reimbursement of any costs that have been obtained fraudulently and reserve the right to take legal action against any person who has made fraudulent application for travel assistance.

# How we use your data

Surrey County Council respects your rights and is committed to ensuring that it manages your data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2019 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You can find out more about how we manage your data on the [privacy notice section of our website](#).