



**Policy: travel assistance for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access education**

March 2025

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## Section 1: Introduction

This policy outlines the travel assistance available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) living within the boundaries of Oldham to access education or training.

The aim of the council's travel assistance policy is to ensure that all children and young people lead lives that are independent and as free from restriction as possible.

The provision of travel assistance by the council will be based on individual needs and circumstances and have regard to the efficient use of resources. Generally, the council believes that most children and young people with SEND will be able to travel free on public transport.

Wherever possible, in the provision of travel assistance, the council will consider travel options that reduce the number and length of vehicle journeys.

This policy explains:

- Who is eligible for travel assistance from Oldham council.
- The statutory basis for the provision of travel assistance by local authorities.
- What kind of travel assistance may be provided.
- How applications for travel assistance are made and assessed; and how parents/carers can appeal against decisions made by the council
- The council's transport service standards.

## Section 2: Eligibility and provision

### Overview

Suitable travel assistance based upon a child or young person's specific needs will be provided for pupils who, because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties, cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school.

In considering whether a child or young person can reasonably be expected to walk to school, the council will consider their specific needs and determine whether they can walk to school. Wherever possible, the council expects parents/carers of children and young people to arrange for their child to attend school in the same way as for parents/carers of children or young people without SEN or disabilities, as this is an important factor in developing independence, social and life skills.

The council reserves the right to make an assessment to determine eligibility for travel assistance under this policy. Assessments are carried out at the travel assistance moderation panel. Terms of reference for the panel can be found in appendix 1.

Travel assistance will not be provided for the following:

- Children or young people taken ill during the day.
- Any type of appointments including medical or any other specialists.
- Children or young people who have been excluded during the school day.
- Breakfast or after school clubs.
- Journeys from/to alternative addresses that incur further transport costs or additional travel time for other passengers.

### What travel assistance may be offered?

Once a child or young person's eligibility for travel assistance has been agreed, the council will decide what type of assistance will be offered. This decision will be based on the most suitable type of travel assistance to meet the identified needs of the individual child or young person and will take account of the council's duties to make the best use of its resources.

It should be noted that the type of travel assistance offered will be reviewed at least annually and may change as the needs of the child or young person change, whilst continuing to ensure the most suitable travel assistance is provided to meet individual needs and the best use of the council's resources.

For children and young people attending school daily, travel assistance will usually only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day.

A child or young person boarding on a weekly basis where the school is closed at weekends will be provided with travel assistance at the beginning and end of the school week, other periods of closure and during term time only.

A child or young person boarding on a termly placement where the school is not closed at weekends will be provided with travel assistance limited to the start and end of the school term, half terms and for periods of whole school closure only. Any other journeys required will be the responsibility of parents/carers including attendance at annual reviews, additional home visits at weekends or any other time.

The council will always consider forms of travel assistance that help to develop independent travel skills to enable children and young people to lead independent lives as they grow older. In post 16 education, this will be a personal travel budget, where eligible, to support independence and preparation for adulthood.

The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to, the options described below.

## **Independent travel training**

To enable children and young people to travel independently, the council will first consider the suitability of independent travel training as their travel assistance offer.

The training will support a child or young person to be taught the necessary skills that will allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport, including:

- Timetables (including time management)
- Orientation
- Road Safety
- Accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets)
- Communication
- Personal Safety (including what-if scenarios)
- Travel Preparation

If the SEND Travel Assistance Team identify through a transport application, the statutory assessment process or an annual review that a child or young person may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training programme, then they will arrange for their travel training provider to conduct an assessment in the first instance to decide if training is a suitable option for the individual.

If it is decided as a suitable option, then arrangements will be made to begin training, at the earliest opportunity. If a child or young person is in receipt of an EHCP, the agreed training and outcomes will be included in Section B and F of the plan.

Our Travel Training Coordinator will initially contact the parent/carer to arrange an assessment and discuss the offer. This assessment process is undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer and involves contributions from the young person and their parents, school staff and other professionals. It is expected that where independent travel training is offered as a travel solution, a child or young person will take this up.

Top up training will be available to support children and young people with transition when moving schools and on social routes during school holidays.

## **Personal travel budget (PTB)**

Once it is agreed that a child or young person is eligible for travel assistance, it may be possible for the council to provide parents/carers with an amount of money to enable them to provide personalised travel arrangements that best and most flexibly meets the needs of their child and family.

The sum provided will be based on the distance travelled from home to school and will not exceed the cost of direct provision of transport by the council, or a share of that cost where the child would otherwise travel with other children in a shared vehicle. This is a contribution towards any cost of travel.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that travel arrangements made by them are safe and accessible and that school attendance is maintained. A personal travel budget can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.

This offer must be appropriate for both the council and the family.

Families are able to request this as an option by contacting the SEN Travel Assistance Team. This option may be of interest if:

- The parent/carer wants to take their child to school but needs support to make it financially viable.
- The child or young person has very complex needs and the parent/carer wants to make their own travel arrangements.
- The parent/carer wants to combine the council's contribution with their own personal finances to provide the child or young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with family circumstances.

The personal travel budget offer can be used flexibly through a range of options, such as:

- Supporting the fuel cost of driving a young person to and from their education setting.
- Arranging with a trusted friend or relative to take the young person to their education setting.
- Arranging with a trusted friend or relative to act as a personal assistant for a young person in a family members vehicle, or their own vehicle.
- Purchasing travel passes or making other arrangements for siblings so they can travel to school whilst parents/carers can transport the young person for who the personal travel budget is allocated.

Families can request this by contacting the SEND Travel Assistance Team. This option will also support families where:

- The parent/carer wants to take their young person to school but needs support to make it financially viable.
- The young person has very complex needs and the parent/carer wants to make their own travel arrangements as they can meet those needs.
- The parent/carer wants to combine the council's contribution with their personal finances to provide their young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with family circumstances.

If a parent/carer is offered this form of travel assistance, it is their responsibility to ensure travel arrangements for the child or young person to:

- Enable them to travel safely.
- Enable them to attend school regularly and on time.
- Enable them to be effectively educated once they arrive at school.
- The level of reimbursement offered would be as follows:

## Mileage rate

A mileage rate of 46p per mile will be used to work out personal travel budgets for parents/carers who have their own vehicle. This is based on the council's usual rate for travel. The sum provided will be at the discretion of the council and considers the route from the home address to school/college. The distance will be measured using the council's transport software and will be calculated for a maximum of two return journeys per day.

The level of reimbursement offered would be as follows:

- The mileage of up to two return journeys per day e.g. driving from home to school, dropping the young person off and returning home is calculated based on total distance.
- The number of times the young person is transported to and from school (total number of return journeys). For example:

Distance ( <i>home to education setting</i> )	Return journey am		Return journey pm		Total daily journey		Total monthly PTB repaid ( <i>20 education days</i> )
	Miles	Rate	Miles	Rate	Miles	Rate	
2 miles	4 miles	£1.84	4 miles	£1.84	8 miles	£3.68	£73.60
5 miles	10 miles	£4.60	10 miles	£4.60	20 miles	£9.20	£184.00
25 miles	25 miles	£23.00	25 miles	£23.00	50 miles	£46.00	£920.00

Payments will be processed each month during the academic year and will reach the parent/carer's account around the 15th day of each month. This is subject to the attendance data being provided in a timely manner by the education setting.

For parents/carers who don't have access to their own vehicle, arrangements will be made based on the individual circumstances through a discretionary payment. For example, based on whether a child or young person requires an individual taxi, chaperone or equipment.

## Transport vehicles

Where assessed as essential, the council may provide a vehicle to transport a child or young person to and from school. Where transport vehicles are provided, these will be provided by a suitably qualified and licensed commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the council.

Children and young people may be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home, which in many cases will be a recognised pick up and drop off point.

Whenever possible, children will travel together in buses. Where necessary these will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned based on school start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all children travelling on a particular vehicle.

Under very exceptional circumstances the council may transport pupils in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person. Arrangements of this kind will be kept under regular review and, where possible, the opportunity will be taken to move to an alternative suitable form of travel assistance to promote and encourage independent. Please note that where possible and appropriate, vehicles may collect children attending different schools to ensure an effective use of resources.

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## **Travel pass**

These are designed to enable a child or young person to travel to school accompanied, if necessary, by an adult via public transport solutions.

A travel pass is not offered as alternative travel assistance for an eligible child or young person.

## **Vehicle transport service standards and provision of passenger assistants**

The vehicle transport service provided by the council for children and young people will operate to service standards.

In some circumstances, where the council has assessed that there is a need, a Passenger assistant may be provided to accompany pupils to school on transport provided by the council.

Passenger Assistants will be provided for the care of children or young people and to assist in the safe operation of the vehicle. A Passenger Assistant will not necessarily be provided simply because the pupil is school-aged or because he/she does not know the driver.

Travel assistance will be provided to meet the needs of a child or young person. There may be circumstances when the transport will need to be reviewed as it is not working effectively.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the child or young person has SEND and this may impact upon their behaviour. If their conduct compromises the safety of anyone travelling with them, the council reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the transport provision. In these cases, the council will work with parent's/carers to try to find another travel solution for the child/young person.



## Section 3: Application and assessment process *(all applicants)*

### Overview

Applications for travel assistance will fully consider the specific needs of the child or young person. Where it is agreed that a child or young person is eligible for travel assistance it will be implemented within 20 working days following the decision. In a situation where a new contract and route needs to be agreed this time scale may be longer in order to fulfil procurement and recruitment processes and to ensure safe travel assistance. In all instances this process will be completed as soon as possible.

The application process is dealt with in three stages, as described below.

### Stage I: application

For all applicants the parent/carer must make a formal request for travel assistance before any support is considered. Application forms can be obtained by:

- **Emailing:** [itu@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:itu@oldham.gov.uk) as preference.
- **Telephoning:** Travel Assistance Team on 0161 770 3209.

Receipt of applications will be acknowledged within five working days. Decisions will be made at the moderation panel which will meet twice a month. An initial evaluation of the application will then determine whether the child or young person is eligible for Travel Assistance.

The parent/carer will be informed in writing of the outcome of the application following the moderation panel.

### Stage II: assessment

This stage will determine the specific needs of the child or young person. Where it is decided that Independent Travel Training may be suitable, the parent or carer will be required to undertake an assessment by an Independent Travel Training Co-ordinator. This would include a home visit, consultation with the child or young person, their parent/carers, school, and any other relevant specialists.

This assessment will normally be completed within fifteen working days following the decision that a child or young person is eligible for travel assistance, depending on the complexity of the circumstances.

If further evidence is required, this may delay the process and parents/carers will be notified in writing within ten working days. Where parents/carers are asked to provide additional evidence and do not do so within the required timescale the application may be declined. If the application is declined at this stage parents/carers may appeal against such a decision if they wish.

### Stage III: implementation

Where the council agrees to provide travel assistance it will decide what type of travel assistance would be most suitable and appropriate to meet the needs of the child or young person.

The parent/carer will receive a Travel Assistance agreement before the travel assistance is provided. If a parent/carer does not accept the travel assistance offered by the council, the parent or carer will need to follow the Travel Assistance appeals process. The offer will remain in place until the appeal is either upheld or overturned by the appeals panel.

In cases where travel assistance is agreed for a limited period, parents/carers will be required to submit a new application, or to provide further information, to secure continued assistance.

At any point throughout the application process parents/carers have the right to appeal.

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## **Travel assistance reviews**

All children and young people's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed regularly and at least annually. Any change to home address or education setting will require a new application being submitted for review.

For children and young people with an EHCP, their continued eligibility for travel assistance will be discussed at the child or young person's annual review. Parents/carers should attend the review to consider whether travel assistance continues to be appropriate. The review will also determine if the type of assistance remains appropriate and when independent travel training should commence. All decisions will be based on the individual needs of children and young people.

Where travel assistance has been granted on a time-limited basis further information will be sought prior to the end of the agreed assistance period to enable a timely review to take place. The council may also review eligibility for travel assistance by means of a scheduled meeting or via telephone contact. If parents/carers do not participate in these reviews, this will not prevent the council and other participants reaching a determination about the continuation of travel assistance. Parents/carers will be informed of all decisions in writing, including notification of their right to appeal.

Travel assistance will also be reviewed when there is a significant change in circumstances, such as a change in home address, school or a change in the child's or young person's needs. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the council immediately of any changes that may affect the provision of travel assistance.

Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next beginning of term, beginning of the half term or sooner where required.

## **Cessation of support**

The council will review and remove travel assistance where the child or young person's individual circumstances have changed and either the child or young person is no longer eligible for support. Assistance may also cease at the request of the parent/carer who may have made alternative arrangements for their child or young person's travel to school.

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## Section 4: Post 16 travel assistance

### Overview

Under the 'Raising the Participation Age' agenda, young people must remain in full time education and training until the age of 18 years. Local authorities have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for all young people aged 16 – 18 years and those continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday, which may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances.

In line with the council's duty under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable and assist participation of learners with learning difficulties in education and learning, this policy will apply, in some cases to young people up to the age of 25 subject to an individual assessment of need.

In line with the Children and Families Act 2014, it is expected that young people work towards independence from the earliest opportunities both at home and through their educational placement. Most young people who will attend college will be able to travel independently and for those who cannot, opportunities for this to take place will be possible through a range of options.

There are several travel options available within the local community that young people can access. Further information can be found on the council website.

Travel assistance may be provided for young people over 16 years with SEND who are participating in education and training, depending on need. For example, those with those with EHCPs in specialist settings with high funding levels with either life limiting health conditions and/or disabilities, profound learning disabilities or complex autism and learning disabilities and complex safeguarding.

Where an out of area provider is chosen, travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis.

Travel support is not available for trips, work experience or any other activity associated with a college course. Assistance regarding those should be discussed directly with the college/post 16 provider.

Unless there is an individual assessment of need for assistance with travel the responsibility for travel to and from college rests with the young person and their family.

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## **Personal travel budget (PTB)**

The main option that will be considered when assessing travel assistance for post 16 young people will be a personal travel budget.

Once it is agreed that a young person is eligible for travel assistance, as described in section three, the standard offer for post 16 learners will be that the council provides parents/carers with an amount of money, i.e. a personal travel budget, to enable them to provide personalised travel arrangements that best and most flexibly suit the needs of the young person and their family.

The sum provided will be based on the distance travelled from home to school and will not exceed the cost of direct provision of transport by the council, or a share of that cost where the young person would otherwise travel with other young people in a shared vehicle.

Families can spend the budget in the way that works best for them, giving them flexibility to tailor their travel arrangements to their own needs. This approach ensures that young people continue to receive support but in a way that promotes independence and preparation for adulthood.

It is parent'/carers' responsibility to ensure that travel arrangements made by them are safe and accessible and that school attendance is maintained. A personal travel budget can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.

The personal travel budget offer must be appropriate for both the council and the family and can be used flexibly through a range of options, such as:

- Supporting the fuel cost of driving a young person to and from their education setting.
- Arranging with a trusted friend or relative to take the young person to their education setting.
- Arranging with a trusted friend or relative to act as a personal assistant for a young person in a family members vehicle, or their own vehicle.
- Purchasing travel passes or making other arrangements for siblings so they can travel to school whilst parents/carers can transport the young person for who the personal travel budget is allocated.

Families can request this as an option by contacting the SEN Travel Assistance Team. This option will also support families where:

- The parent/carer wants to take their young person to school but needs support to make it financially viable.
- The young person has very complex needs and the parent/carer wants to make their own travel arrangements as they can meet those needs.
- The parent/carer wants to combine the council's contribution with their personal finances to provide their young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with family circumstances. This may include the use of social care funded Personal Assistance to support on transport.

If a parent/carer takes up this form of travel assistance, it is their responsibility to ensure travel arrangements for their young person to:

- Enable them to travel safely.
- Enable them to attend their education setting regularly and on time.
- Enable them to be effectively educated once they arrive at the education setting.

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## **Mileage rates**

Details about mileage rates and reimbursement can be found in section two.

## **Exceptions to post 16 personal travel budgets**

It is understood that a personal travel budget may not be appropriate in all circumstances, especially for young people with the most complex needs. The approach taken through offering personal travel budgets, as a standard offer, will be adjusted to allow for council-organised transport to be provided to meet the needs of young people where a personal travel budget would not be appropriate.

All travel assistance, including personal travel budgets, will remain at the discretion of the council and any young person must be eligible for travel assistance before being considered for a personal travel budget.

## **Eligibility criteria for council organised transport**

Eligibility criteria for council organised transport for post 16 young people will be considered under section three of this policy.

## **Independent travel training**

In order for support young people to travel independently, the council may offer Independent Travel Training as their travel assistance offer. This may run concurrent with existing travel assistance offers to manage the transition for an agreed period through a phased approach to starting with new education providers at key transition points. The training will support the young person to be taught the necessary skills that will allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport, including:

- Timetables (including time management).
- Orientation.
- Road Safety.
- Accessibility (access to transport, exits and purchasing tickets).
- Cancellations (cancelled and delayed services)
- Communication.
- Personal Safety (including what-if scenarios).
- Route orientation (e.g. bus, tram and train interchanges)
- Managing transport

Section 509AC of the Education Act 1996 defines persons of sixth form age for the purposes of the sixth form transport duty.

If the SEND Travel Assistance team identify through a transport application, the statutory assessment process or an annual review that a young person may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training programme. They will then arrange for their travel training provider to conduct an assessment to decide if training is a suitable option for the young person. If it is decided as a suitable option for the young person then arrangements will be made to begin training, at the earliest opportunity.

Our Travel Training Co Ordinator will initially contact the parent/carer to arrange an assessment and discuss the offer. This assessment process is undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer and involves contributions from the young person and their parents, school staff and other professionals. It is expected that where independent travel training is offered as a travel solution, a young person will take this up.

Top up training ~~will~~ may be available to support children and young people with transition when moving schools and on social routes during school holidays.

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### **Transport vehicles** *(post 16)*

Where assessed as essential, the council may provide a vehicle to transport a young person to and from their education setting. Where transport vehicles are provided, these will be through a suitably qualified and licensed commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the council.

Young people may be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home, which in many cases will be a recognised pick up and drop off point.

Whenever possible, young people will travel together in buses. Where necessary these will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned based on the education setting start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all young people travelling on a particular vehicle.

Under very exceptional circumstances the council may transport young people in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the young person. Arrangements of this kind will be kept under regular review and, where possible, the opportunity will be taken to move to an alternative suitable form of travel assistance to promote and encourage independent.

Where possible and appropriate, vehicles may collect young people attending different education settings to ensure an effective use of resources.

Travel assistance may be provided for young people over 16 years with SEND who are participating in education and training depending on need. For example, those with those with EHCPs with either life limiting health conditions and disabilities, profound learning disabilities or complex autism and learning disabilities in specialist post 16 settings will be considered for transport linked to their level of need (typically indicated by banding of B4 and above) in at least one domain and above for post 16 global developmental delay.

Where an out of area provider is chosen, travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis.

### **Travel pass** *(post 16)*

Travel passes are available to enable a young person to travel to school accompanied, if necessary, by an adult via public transport solutions.

This is not offered as alternative travel assistance for an eligible young person.

## Section 5: Appeals

### Overview

If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the council, or the parent/carer disagrees with the type of assistance being offered, parent/carers have a right of appeal. The appeal should be made in writing within 20 working days of the decision letter being received by the parents/carers. Appeals are administered in two stages.

#### **Stage 1: review by the senior transport officer and the SEND service manager:**

A parent or carer has 20 working days from receipt of the council's travel assistance decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.

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

Section 52 of the statutory guidance for local authorities, January 2024 clarifies that reasons such as parent/carers working patterns or the fact they have children attending more than one school, on their own, will not normally be considered good reasons for them being unable to accompany their child. These circumstances apply to many parents/carers, and, in most circumstances, it is reasonable to expect they make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities, i.e. their responsibilities as an employee and as a parent.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request, the SEND Travel Assistance Manager and Head of SEND and Inclusion reviews the original decision and sends the parent/carer a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review, setting out:

- The nature of the decision reached.
- How the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB).
- 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.
- Information about how the parent or carer can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

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## **Stage 2: review by an independent appeal panel**

A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the council's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate to stage two.

Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents request an independent appeal panel considers written and verbal representations from both the parent and officers involved in the case and gives a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days of the date of the appeal hearing), setting out:

- The nature of the decision reached.
- How the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB).
- 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.
- Information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the original decision-making process but will be part of the Early Years, Education, & Skills division. Panel members will be suitably experienced to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of parents/carers and the council. Road safety requirements will be complied with, and no child or young person will be placed at unnecessary risk.

In the event of an appeal being upheld by an independent appeal panel, the local authority accepts responsibility from this date and support will be set up within 10 working days, subject to procurement timescales.



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**Local Government Ombudsman:**

Parents, carers, children and young people have the right of complaint to the local Government Ombudsman.

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

**Complaints**

Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the provision of the service should be made in the first instance to the Travel Assistance Team.

All complaints on the process for assessing eligibility for transport provision will be handled through the council's formal complaints process. Full details are available on the council website.

Complaints regarding the outcome of the assessment process will be addressed as part of the appeals process as described above.

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## **Section 6: Additional information**

### **Change of school day**

The council will consider making changes to arrangements however, if additional costs are involved, the council reserves the right to arrange for all or part of those costs to be charged to the school concerned.

If there is a change to time of the school start or finish day for school events or school holidays, transport will not be provided.

It should be noted that examination timetables do not constitute a change in the school day.

### **Exceptional circumstances**

Each case will be submitted and considered on its own merits by the SEND Moderation Panel.

### **Home address**

The home address is where the child or young person resides. Where they spend time with both parents/carers in separate homes and both have parental responsibility, the council will need to establish where the majority of school nights (Sunday to Thursday) are spent and treat that as the home address.

Travel assistance is not provided to alternative addresses, e.g. grandparents, child-minders. Any change in transport remains the decision of the council and we may request proof of which parent is the beneficiary of any child benefit payment.

### **Low-income families**

Children whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit or children who are entitled to free school meals. For those families in receipt of Universal Credit the statutory guidelines for eligibility as low income will be followed.

### **Relevant educational establishment**

Section 508-B (10) of the Education Act 1996 defines a relevant educational establishment as either a qualifying school or places (other than schools) where a child is receiving education by virtue of the arrangements made under section 19 (1) of the Act.

Qualifying schools are community, foundation or voluntary schools; community or foundation special schools, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units, maintained nursery schools or city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts or academies.

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## Transport for Greater Manchester

Travel support can be obtained from Concessionary Fares operated by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).

- **Address:** 2 Piccadilly Place, Manchester, M1 3BG
- **Telephone:** 0161 244 1000 general enquiries (7am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm Saturday and Sunday)
- **Website:** <https://tfgm.com/>

Concessionary travel is offered to disabled people, whatever their age. Depending on individual circumstances this can be free or reduced cost travel on buses, trains and the Metro link. More information is available from TfGM 0161 244 1050.

Ring and Ride service provides door to door transport for people who find it very difficult or impossible to reach a bus stop or access general buses.

The service is not intended for daily travel to or from college but could help a young person with other journeys. The ring and ride service can be accessed through:

- **Website:** <https://tfgm.com/public-transport/ring-and-ride-minibuses-registration> Telephone enquiries: 0845 688 4933 or 0161200 6011.
- **Telephone bookings:** 0845 688 3989.

A travel voucher scheme is available for people who are unable to use general buses and who have serious walking difficulties or are registered blind. Vouchers are not free but are substantially discounted. If young people have any queries about the scheme, they should contact TfGM details above.

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## **Section 7: Additional journeys**

### **School Trips**

Travel assistance timings may be adjusted by the council on request from schools to take account of connections with the departure/arrival of educational or recreational school trips. Schools must notify such requests to the council as early as possible to enable an assessment of any additional costs to be made.

Where adjustments in timings would result in additional transport costs to the council, schools will need to take this into account in the planning of school trips, and such costs must be reimbursed to the council as part of the school's costing arrangements for the whole trip.

### **Work experience**

Transport will not be provided to enable students to undertake work experience.

### **Induction and taster days**

Transport may be made available for entitled children attending Induction Days or 'Taster Days' at the council's Special Schools and resourced provisions. Transport may also be provided for entitled children attending Induction/Taster Days at Independent Schools where such a school has been named by the council in the child or young person's Education, Health and Care Plan and there is no other school closer to the child's home that can meet their needs.

### **Breakfast and after school clubs**

Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend breakfast clubs or after school clubs that do not fulfil part of the school curriculum, except where transport to/from such clubs can be provided without additional cost to the council and where staff are available to support where required.

### **Illness at school**

Transport will not normally be provided for students who are taken ill at school to enable them to return home. This is a parental or school responsibility.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments. This is a parental responsibility.

### **Detentions**

Transport will not be provided to take children home after detentions. This is a parental responsibility.

### **College attendance whilst registered at school**

For older children or young people who spend a whole day at college or become dual-registered at the college whilst still being a registered pupil at a school, travel arrangements on those days may be adjusted to set down and pick up at the college, if this is possible within existing arrangements at no additional cost. If not, travel arrangements are the responsibility of the school or parent/carer.

Transport arrangements for journeys during the school day to attend college placements are the responsibility of the school at which children and young people are registered (for those with an EHCP this will be the school named on the plan).

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## Section 8: Quality assurance

### Vehicle transport service standards

The Travel Assistance Team is responsible for arranging and overseeing all agreed methods of travel assistance provided to pupils with or without an EHCP.

Travel assistance will be provided according to the agreed school placement arrangements, e.g. daily, fortnightly, or in the case of 52-week provision at the start and end of the placement only. The responsibilities of the Travel Assistance Team include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing agreed travel assistance, e.g. allocating suitable routes and pick-up and drop-off points.
- Day to day amendments/queries relating to travel assistance.
- Managing provider contracts.
- Managing contracts with licensed transport providers.
- Monitoring of transport providers.
- Investigating and responding to complaints about transport services.

The service standards described in this policy act as guidance and clarity for the service users for who travel assistance is provided. Underlying these standards is the principle that, if the council agrees to provide travel assistance, it will be provided in a safe, suitable and cost-effective manner, taking account of the child's specific needs and about the best use of the council's resources.

### Vehicles

- All transport will be provided in accordance with contractual standards and legislation.
- All vehicles will be properly licensed in accordance with local regulation and national legislation.
- The council will conduct regular monitoring of quality and service standards on all vehicles operated by its contractors.
- Vehicles will have specialist wheelchair access and wheelchair restraint systems where necessary.
- All vehicles will be road worthy, clean inside and out, fitted with seat belts and carry emergency equipment i.e. fire extinguisher and first aid kit and any other equipment/notices required by law, e.g. children sign on front and back of vehicle.

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## Passenger Assistants

The council may provide a Passenger Assistant for children and young people who have severe physical or learning disabilities and/or challenging behaviours and where the child's safety requires it, and as determined during the assessment phase. The need for a Passenger Assistant will be reviewed annually as part of the child's annual review and will be founded on:

- Passenger Assistants will not be provided where parents/carers make their own travel arrangements.
- Where provided, the council will make every effort to ensure the same Passenger Assistant is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to staff shortages, illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of resources.
- The Passenger Assistant should assist children on and off the vehicle and ensure they are seated safely while the vehicle is moving. This includes the fitting of all seat belts and harnesses.
- Passenger Assistants must treat parents/carers and children with respect and avoid confrontations. It is also expected that parents/carers will treat the passenger assistants with respect and consideration.
- Passenger Assistants will remain with the vehicle until a school member of staff arrives to take children on arrival at the school so that at no time are children left unattended on the vehicle.
- If the Passenger Assistant has a concern for any child in their care, the head teacher and the Travel Assistance Team will be informed.
- Passenger Assistants are not authorised to leave a child with anyone other than their parent/carer or named responsible adult (16+) identified in advance to the Travel Assistance Team in writing by the parent/carer.
- All Passenger Assistants will have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.
- Passenger Assistants must always carry and display Oldham council identification.
- Passenger Assistants must adhere to the council's no smoking policy.
- Passenger Assistants have strict instructions not to enter into any personal arrangements with parents/carers, including changing pick up or drop off points without consulting with the Travel Assistance Team.

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## **Drivers**

- Drivers must always carry and display suitable identification.
- Drivers must have enhanced DBS clearance.
- Drivers must, as far as possible, be punctual.
- Drivers must ensure that all wheelchairs are securely clamped.
- Drivers must treat parents, children and council staff with respect and avoid confrontations. It is also expected that parents/carers and council staff will treat the drivers with respect and consideration.
- Drivers must report any poor behaviour of passengers to their supervisor to relay onto the Travel Assistance Team. Also, to the school and parent as necessary.
- Drivers must adhere to the council's no smoking policy.
- The driver is to stop, as close to the home address or collection point as traffic conditions will safely permit.
- The driver is not allowed to sound his horn to alert parents that they are there.
- Neither drivers nor Passenger Assistants are responsible for taking a child across the road if a parent/carer is waiting on the other side.

## **Journey times**

- The council will endeavour to ensure that pupils arrive at school fit to learn and recognise that the length of the journey to school can affect this aim.
- Journey times may be longer where pupils are travelling to schools and colleges outside of Oldham.
- On occasions there may be factors outside the council's control e.g. unforeseen traffic congestion or bad weather that may affect journey times.
- In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the council to vary planned routes, and this may affect pick up and drop off times. Where this is the case the council or provider will endeavour to contact parents/carers in advance to advise them.
- Pick up and drop off times affect journey times and will therefore not be altered to fit parental circumstances (for example, a parent's work schedule)

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### **Vehicle waiting times (*mornings*)**

Parents/carers are expected to be available at home or at an agreed collection point, at an agreed time to meet transport in the morning.

To keep journey times down to an absolute minimum and ensure that all pupils arrive at school on time, all vehicles will adhere to strict waiting time limits as follows:

- If a child is not ready, or not at the agreed collection point, the vehicle will wait for a maximum of 3 minutes after the agreed pick-up time and then move off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
- If the vehicle arrives early for a pick-up it will wait until the official set time and then a maximum of 3 minutes before moving off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
- If the vehicle is running late for a pickup, the crew are expected to advise parents/carers of the delay as soon as possible. When a vehicle arrives at a family home or collection point, the horn will not be sounded. Parents/carers are expected to have their child ready and waiting to board the vehicle.

### **Vehicle waiting times (*afternoons*)**

Parents/carers must be available at home or the nominated delivery point, at the regular drop off time, every afternoon to meet their child.

Parents/carers must provide emergency contact details.

If a parent/carer is unable to meet their child at the specified time and location, the emergency contact details will be used. If unsuccessful and as a final resort, the child will be taken to a place of safety, and the parent/carer will be notified. It will then be the parents/carers responsibility to collect from that place.

At times, parents/carers may need to make emergency alternative arrangements for the handover of their child to a nominated responsible adult, either at the home address or at an alternative address within Oldham. In these cases, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to notify the Travel Assistance Team and make suitable arrangements to ensure their child's safety.

In circumstances where vehicles are delayed or late arriving the parent/carer should contact the Travel Assistance team. The team will take steps to directly address the situation with the provider.

Where no responsible adult is available to meet a child from transport on more than two occurrences, travel assistance will be reviewed and may be suspended or permanently withdrawn. In these cases, the parents/carers will receive phone calls and/or letters covering:

- Initially raising the concerns.
- Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of removal of travel assistance.
- Final warning indicating that travel assistance will be removed.
- Formal notice of removal of travel assistance.

The Travel Assistance Team will issue a final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal. In these cases, parents/carers become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required. All verbal conversations with parents/carers will be recorded on the councils' transport system.



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## Absences

Where a child cannot attend school on any day due to illness it is the parents/carers responsibility to:

- Contact the Travel Assistance Team the day before travel is required, if it is known that the child will be off school the next day or...
- Contact the Travel Assistance Team as early as possible in the morning of the day their child is due to travel if the child has only just begun to show signs of illness. Please note an out of hours answer phone service is available by calling 0161 770 3209. The Travel Assistance Team will pick up any messages at 7:30am and relay details of absences to the appropriate Passenger Assistant or Contractor.

When travel assistance is cancelled due to illness, with no specified timeframe, it will only be reinstated when the parent/carer notifies the Travel Assistance Team.

This advice should be given on the day before the child is due to return to school.

Travel assistance will be reviewed and may be suspended for a period or permanently withdrawn, if it becomes apparent that transport is not being cancelled with reasonable advance warning.

Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in such circumstances.

## Behaviour

Oldham council reserves the right to refuse to provide travel assistance where a child or young person's behaviour is such that it is unacceptable (the child or young person's additional needs will be considered). In these cases, the parents will receive no more than four letters:

- Initially raising the concerns.
- Informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of removal of travel assistance.
- Final warning indicating that travel assistance will be removed.
- Formal notice of removal of travel assistance.

The SEN Service jointly with the transport team will issue the fourth and final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the appeal process.

Where the council or its contractors consider that a child or young person's behaviour is so extreme as to constitute an immediate or ongoing risk to the health and safety of her/himself, other service users, the vehicle crew, or members of the public, the council reserves the right to suspend the provision of travel assistance immediately.

This will be until, or unless, the issue can be resolved by parents/carers, the child or young person's education setting, or other appropriate professionals, to the council's satisfaction that all reasonable adjustments have been made.

Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the child concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that results in wilful damage can result in withdrawal of travel assistance.

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## Health and safety

All wheelchairs and buggies used for passenger seating in the vehicles, i.e. not folded and stowed, must be crash tested and certified suitable for transport.

The Travel Assistance Team will use the Transport Information Forms completed by parents/carers each year, together with information provided by the SEN team, to inform Risk Assessments for travel arrangements for each child.

Most children and young people will be covered by a generic Risk Assessment for transport. However, in more complex cases, a specific Risk Assessment will be undertaken.

Relevant information from Risk Assessments will be shared with transport providers to enable them to exercise their duty of care to passengers that they are transporting. Such information will be protected by the council's contractors in accordance with agreed data protection arrangements.

Passenger Assistants are trained in Disability Awareness, safeguarding, basic First Aid and receive additional training specific to the child's needs where necessary. However, in the event of an emergency, Passenger Assistants and drivers will contact 999 emergency services in the first instance.

Transport staff are not permitted to administer any medication to passengers.

It is vital that parents/carers advise the Travel Assistance Team of any health concerns that may affect their child whilst on transport. Such information may include details of things such as allergies, for example, even if not thought to be directly relevant to transport. This information must be included in the Transport Information Form when vehicle transport is agreed and reviewed annually, and whenever the child's needs change.

Children and young people are not permitted to consume food or drinks whilst on board a vehicle unless this has been agreed in exceptional circumstances by the Travel Assistance Team. This standard will be strictly enforced to ensure the continuing safety of all passengers whilst travelling.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that arrangements are in place AM and PM to ensure the safe handover of their child to and from the care of the transport provider.

The handover of children must happen at the vehicle, apart from in exceptional circumstances agreed with the Travel Assistance Team in advance, to ensure that the Passenger Assistant and driver can maintain the supervision and safety of other passengers.

In the case of extreme weather conditions, transport services will not operate. Decisions to cancel transport will be taken by the Transport Manager and/or transport providers according to information provided by schools and on the basis of their own risk assessments.

In the case of extreme weather conditions, should a parent or carer choose to transport their child to school themselves, then it is their responsibility to undertake the return journey as well.

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## **Safeguarding**

All staff will be expected to undertake safeguarding training and will be required to have a current Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) certificate.

All children and young people will be handed over to a responsible adult at the drop off address, provided by the parent/carer. Drivers and Passenger Assistants are not permitted to leave children and young people with any person under the age of 16 or who is not an 'authorised' adult.

Prior to starting transport, the Travel Assistance Team will request details of any authorised adult and/or emergency contact details for any person who a child or young person can be handed over to in the event of an emergency.

A child or young person must never be removed from a vehicle anywhere on a route other than at the normal setting down point for that journey. The only exceptions to this would-be long-distance journey, when it is necessary to make pre-agreed rest stops, or in emergencies.

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## Section 9: Legislation

### Home to school travel

There is no statutory entitlement to travel assistance for children aged under 5 years. Children under the age of 5 years old will not be provided with travel assistance other than in exceptional circumstances.

Where there is an education, health and care plan (EHCP) in place, there may be agreements where parents/carers want a place at a school that is not the closest to the home address. If there is a closer suitable school, the council can put a condition in Section I of the EHCP to the effect that: 'The closest suitable school is 'A' School. The parents have expressed a preference for 'B' School. The child can attend 'B' school on the condition the parents pay the cost of transport'.

If the total cost of the parent/carers choice of school compared to the council's choice of school (including transport) is so significant as to represent an inefficient use of resources, then the council can name two schools, with the condition the parents provide transport to their choice of school.

In support of this policy, the council works with schools to provide safe travel routes to and from school, to encourage sustainable methods of transport, including walking and cycling, and to encourage all forms of independent travel by children and young people wherever possible and practicable.

Parents/carers are responsible for their child's safety while travelling to and from school. Where the council has aided with travel assistance to support a child or young person's access to education, parents/carers remain responsible for their child's safety before and after these arrangements take place.

A qualifying school is taken to mean the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child or young person, and any special educational needs that the child may have.

Any travelling arrangements or expenses will be the responsibility of parents/carers if there is a nearer suitable qualifying school unless the school is solely named in Section I of an Education, Health and Care Plan. In these circumstances, the costs will be calculated by the Travel Assistance Team and decision will be made with regard to the effective use of local authority resources.

It is the parents/carers responsibility to ensure their child gets to and from school safely and they should consider the practicalities of choosing a school that is not within the qualifying walking distance.

### Statutory school age

Children and young people aged from five years of age up to the last day of the school year when they reach 16 years of age. Under the 'Raising the Participation Age' agenda, young people must remain in fulltime education and training until the age of 18 years.

### Statutory walking distance

Statutory walking distance is two miles for children aged up to eight and three miles for those aged eight and over. The statutory walking distance is measured by the shortest route along which a child or young person, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. Walking routes are measured using Google Maps system which use pathway mapping.

## Home to college travel

Under the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006), local authorities have a duty in certain circumstances to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary in order to ensure that suitable home to school travel arrangements are made for the purpose of facilitating a child or young person's attendance at relevant educational establishments for those below sixth form age.

Local authorities have a duty to facilitate access to education and/or training for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances. For this to apply, the family must be able to demonstrate the following:

- Family must reside with the Borough of Oldham for the duration of their course
- College/school must be the nearest that offers the course. If the young person chooses a college further away, they must demonstrate exceptional need to attend that college to qualify for travel assistance. If they cannot do so the young person will be responsible for their own costs.

## Further information and links

This policy has been developed with regard to Department for Education guidance. This sets out duties related to:

- Section 508A of the Education Act 1996: sustainable travel to school.
- Section 508B of and Schedule 35B to the Education Act 1996: travel arrangements for eligible children.
- Section 508C of the Education Act 1996: travel arrangements for other children.
- The School Information (England) Regulations 2008: publication of information about travel arrangements.

## Links

- Travel to school for children of compulsory school age:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/659d7ebb0dd0a200138b612a/Travel\\_to\\_school\\_for\\_children\\_of\\_compulsory\\_school\\_age.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/659d7ebb0dd0a200138b612a/Travel_to_school_for_children_of_compulsory_school_age.pdf)
- Oldham Council complaints and feedback:  
[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100004/about\\_the\\_council/630/complaints\\_or\\_feedback\\_about\\_the\\_council#:~:text=Please%20note%20if%20you%20cannot,calls%20within%202%20working%20days](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100004/about_the_council/630/complaints_or_feedback_about_the_council#:~:text=Please%20note%20if%20you%20cannot,calls%20within%202%20working%20days)
- Local Government Ombudsman:  
<https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

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## **Appendix 1: SEND Travel Assistance Moderation Panel, terms of reference**

### **Purpose of the panel**

The panel will ensure effective planning and decision making for travel assistance in relation to children and young people who, because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties, cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest qualifying school.

Its remit is to consider and make decisions on all applications for travel assistance.

The panel remit may widen to discuss additional requests for exclusions, respite care and school attendance support.

### **Strategic oversight**

- To provide overall decision making on all aspects of the SEND travel assistance assessment process.
- Key decision making regarding what type of travel assistance will be offered. This decision will be based on the most suitable type of travel assistance to meet the identified needs of the individual child or young person.
- Active monitoring of financial, health and safeguarding risks.
- Ensure that effective use is made of all resources.
- Provide a challenge and scrutiny to Travel Assistance decision making to ensure the needs of the child or young person are met and reviewed frequently.
- Ensure tripartite funding is in place should the complexity of medical need require health and care quality assured medical support by passenger assistants

### **Decision making**

The Panel will consider:

- Whether the child or young person's needs meets the agreed criteria (outlined in the policy) for Travel Assistance.
- What type of Travel Assistance (outlined in the policy) will be offered to meet the identified needs of the individual child or young person.

### **Membership and meeting dates**

The Panel will meet weekly, and meetings will be held every Friday 2:30 – 3:30pm

Membership includes:

1. SEND Service Manager (or nominee)
2. Parent/carer representative (POINT)
3. SEND Transport Manager
4. Travel Assistance Team
5. SEND Travel Coordinator
6. Travel Assistance Team
7. Designated Clinical Officer (DCO)

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The Senior Transport Support Officer will ensure accurate and relevant information is brought to panel on individual application forms so panel members can make informed decisions.

The panel will be supported by the Senior Transport Support Officer who will ensure:

- All applications are presented to the senior transport officer by close of play the Thursday before the meeting.
- All decisions are fully recorded and communicated following the panel
- All decisions will be communicated in writing parents/carers within 5 working days and logged on Transys.

**Expectations of the Senior Transport Officer presenting to panel are:**

A brief presentation taken from the one-sided precis of the case taken from the panel sheet to be fully prepared to answer the following questions:

- What is the specific resource request contained in the application?
- What are their recommendations for Travel Assistance based on their understanding of the evidence?
- What are the views of the parent/carers i.e. what do they want?
- Do they understand the panel decision including all the information they need to relay?  
Can they read them back to Panel, so we know they have written them down and understood them?