

Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities accessing Education.

July 2019

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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. As a general rule, the Council believes that the majority of children and young people with SEND will be able to travel free on public transport.
- 1.4 This policy is set out in four sections as follows:

SECTION 2 – Eligibility and Provision

SECTION 3 – Post 16 Travel

SECTION 4 - Appeals

SECTION 5 – Legislation, Additional Information and Quality Standards

- 1.5 Wherever possible, in the provision of travel assistance, the Council will consider travel options that reduce the number and length of vehicle journeys.
- 1.6 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.

2 Eligibility and Provision

- 2.1 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 school¹.
- 2.2 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 make arrangements 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.

¹ Paragraph 30, Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, July 2014.

2.3 The Council reserves the right to make an assessment to determine eligibility for travel assistance under this policy². Assessments are carried out at the Travel Assistance Moderation Panel. Terms of Reference for the panel can be found in Appendix 1.

2.4 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

The Council's policy on the provision of travel assistance for additional journeys is described in more detail at Section D.

What travel assistance may be offered?

2.5 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.

2.6 For children attending school on a daily basis, travel assistance will usually only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day.

2.7 A child 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 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.

2.8 The Council's policy on the provision of travel assistance for additional journeys in various circumstances is explained in Section D.

2.9 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.

2.10 The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to:

² Section 508B, Education Act 1996.

Independent travel training:

In order to enable children and young people to travel independently, Oldham 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.

- 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 EHC Plan, the agreed training and outcomes will be included in Section B and F of the EHC plan.

A trainer from our commissioned travel training provider, will initially contact the parent/carers 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.

It is the parent/carers' responsibility to ensure that travel arrangements made by them are safe and accessible and that school attendance is maintained. A PTB 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

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; and
- enable them to be effectively educated once they arrive at school

The level of reimbursement offered would be as follows:

- the mileage of a return journey e.g. driving from home to school, dropping the child or young person off and returning home, calculated at 46p per mile
- the number of times the child or young person is transported to and from school (total number of return journeys)
- payment is processed each month during the academic year and will reach the parent/carer's account no later than the 15th of each month

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 on the basis of 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.***

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.

Note: This is not offered as alternative travel assistance for an eligible child or young person

Vehicle transport service standards and provision of passenger assistants

- 2.11 The vehicle transport service provided by the Council for children and young people will operate to the service standards described at Section D.
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 Travel assistance will be provided to meet the needs of a child/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/young person has SEND and this may impact upon their behaviour, if the conduct of the child/young person 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. See Section D

Application and assessment process (all applicants)

- 2.14 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 as soon as possible following the decision. In a situation where a new contract and/or a Passenger Assistant needs to be procured this time scale may be longer in order to fulfil procurement and recruitment processes and to ensure safe travel assistance. In all instances however, this process will be completed as soon as possible.
- 2.15 The application process is dealt with in three stages.

Stage 1: Initial 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 from the Oldham Council website or by telephoning the Travel Assistance Team on 0161 770 3209. Applications will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt of the application. 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.

Stage 2: 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 Trainer. 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 3: 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. See Section 4 of the policy

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, in order to secure continued assistance.

At any point throughout the application process parents/carers have the right to appeal as detailed in Section C.

Travel Assistance Reviews

- 2.16 All children and young people's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed regularly and at least annually.

For children and young people with an EHC Plan, their continued eligibility for travel assistance will be discussed at the child or young person's annual review. Parents/carers should attend the review in order to consider whether or not 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.

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 Oldham 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.

- 2.17 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.

- 2.18 Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next half school term / school term or sooner where possible.

Cessation of Support:

- 2.19 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's or young person's travel to school.

3 Post 16 Travel

- 3.1 Local Authorities have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for all young people aged 16 -18 years ³ and those continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances. Under Raising the Participation Age Agenda, young people must remain in full time education and training until the age of 18 years.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 In line with the Children and Families Act 2014 and as part of the SEND reforms, it is expected that young people will work towards independence from the earliest opportunities both at home and through their educational placement. The majority of young people who will attend college will be able to travel independently and for those who cannot, opportunities for this to take place should be maximised, through a range of providers.
- 3.4 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. There are a number of travel options available within the local community that young people can access. Alternative travel options are listed at:
http://www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/714/home_to_school_transport_policy_annex_a
- 3.5 Travel assistance may be provided for young people over 16 years with special educational needs who are participating in Education and Training. Where an out of area provider is chosen, travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis.
- 3.6 Travel support is not available for trips, work experience of any other activity associated with the college course. Assistance should be discussed directly with the college.
- 3.7 The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to:

Independent travel training:

In order for support children to travel independently, Oldham Council may offer Independent Travel Training as their travel assistance offer. 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.

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

³ 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, then they will arrange for their travel training provider to conduct an assessment to decide if training is a suitable option for the individual. If it is decided as a suitable option for the young person then arrangements will be made to begin training, at the earliest opportunity.

A trainer from Pure Innovations 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 be available to support children and young people with transition when moving schools and on social routes during school holidays.

Personal Travel Budget (PTB):

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- the number of times the young person is transported to and from school (total number of return journeys)
- payments are processed each month during the academic year and will reach the parent/carer's account no later than the 15th of each month

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 on the basis of 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.***

Travel pass: Travel passes are available to enable a child or 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 child or young person.

4 Appeals Procedure

- 4.1 **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:**

4.2 **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 or 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.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request, the Senior Transport Officer and the SEND Service Manager 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; and
- Information about how the parent or carer can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

4.3 **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 the matter 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; and
- Information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

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

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.

4.4 **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.

4.5 **Complaints**

Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the provision of the service should be made in the first instance to the Transport 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 using the following link:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200143/complaints_and_feedback/757/services_for_children_and_families_complaints

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

5 Legislation, Additional Information and Quality Standards

Legislation and responsibilities home to school travel

- 5.1 There is no statutory entitlement to travel assistance for pre-school children. Children of pre-school age will not be provided with travel assistance other than in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>
- 5.5 Parents/carers are responsible for their child's safety while travelling to and from school. Where the Council has provided assistance with travel to support a child access education, parents/carers remain responsible for their child's safety before and after these arrangements take place.
- 5.6 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, and any special educational needs that the child may have.
- 5.7 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 EHC 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.
- 5.8 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.

Legislation and responsibilities home to college travel

- 5.9 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's attendance at relevant educational establishments for children below 6th form age.
- 5.10 In addition, local authorities also 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.

- 5.11 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 be given assistance. If they cannot do so the young person will be responsible for their own costs
- Additional Information**
- 5.12 **Change of School Day:** The council will consider making changes to arrangements however, if additional costs are involved, the Council reserves the right to make arrangements 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.
- 5.13 **Exceptional Circumstances:** Each case will be submitted and considered on its own merits by the SEND Moderation Panel.
- 5.14 **Home Address:** the address where the child resides. Where a child spends 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.
- 5.15 **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.
- 5.16 **Mileage rate:** A mileage rate of forty 46p per mile will be paid for the return journey based upon the mileage determined by the Council's ICT transport data base measurement tool. This will be paid after reconciling with school attendance records.
- 5.17 **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.
- 5.18 **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 Raising the Participation Age Agenda, young people must remain in fulltime education and training until the age of 18 years.

- 5.19 **Statutory Walking Distance:** statutory walking distance is two miles for pupils 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 accompanied as necessary may walk with reasonable safety. Walking routes are measured using Google Maps system which utilise pathway mapping.

5.20 **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.

Travel voucher scheme – this 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.

Additional Journeys

This section explains the Council's policy for the provision of Travel Assistance for journeys additional to the normal provision at the beginning and end of the normal school working day.

- 5.21 **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.

- 5.22 **Work Experience.** Transport will not be provided to enable students to undertake work experience.
- 5.23 **Induction Days/ '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's Statement or Education and Health Care Plan and there is no other school closer to the child's home that can meet the child's needs.
- 5.24 **Breakfast Clubs/After School Clubs.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend breakfast clubs/ 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.
- 5.25 **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.
- 5.26 **Medical/Dental Appointments.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments. This is a parental responsibility.
- 5.27 **Detentions.** Transport will not be provided to take children home after detentions. This is a parental responsibility.
- 5.28 **College Attendance Whilst Registered at School.** For older children 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 pupils are registered (for pupils with statements of SEN or EHC Plans this will be the school named on the statement or plan).

Vehicle Transport Service Standards

- 5.29 The Travel Assistance Team is responsible for arranging and overseeing all agreed methods of travel assistance provided to pupils with or without a Statement of SEN/EHC Plan. 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
- 5.30 The service standards described below 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 with regard to the best use of the Council's resources.

5.31 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.

5.32 Transport Service Personnel

5.32.1 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.
- 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.
- 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 should deliver children to a member of school staff 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 carry and display Oldham Council identification at all times.
- 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.

5.32.2 Drivers

- Drivers must carry and display suitable identification at all times.
- 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 ensure that all passenger harness and safety straps are properly adjusted and fitted securely before the journey commences.
- 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.

5.33 Health and Safety

- All wheelchairs and buggies used for passenger seating in the vehicles (ie 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. The majority of children/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 these 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.

5.34 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)

5.35 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/carers are 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/carers are 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.

5.36 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.
- In the event that a parent/carers 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/carers 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 no more than four letters
 - (i) initially raising the concerns
 - (ii) informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal
 - (iii) final warning indicating that transport will be removed.
 - (iv) the Travel Assistance Team jointly with Contracts and Commissioning Manager 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 parental route of appeal. In these cases, parents/carers become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

5.37 Absences

- Where a child cannot attend school on any particular 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 of time 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.

5.38 Behaviour

Oldham Council reserves the right to refuse to provide travel assistance where a child's/young person's behaviour is such that it is unacceptable (the child's / young person's additional needs will be taken into account). In these cases, the parents will receive no more than four letters (i) initially raising the concerns (ii) informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal (iii) final warning indicating that transport will be removed. 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. In these cases, parents become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

- Where the Council or its contractors consider that a child's / 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 until or unless the issue can be resolved by parents/ carers, the child's/young person's school/college, or other appropriate professionals, to the Council's satisfaction that all reasonable adjustments have been made. If a child or young person is suspended from the provision of travel assistance in these circumstances, her/his parents will become responsible for their child's attendance at school and the provision of any travel support required.
- 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.

5.39 Safeguarding Children and Young People

- All children and young people will be handed over to a responsible adult at the drop off address, provided by parent/carer and in line with point 3.3. 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.

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 that 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

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

Terms of reference:

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.

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;

SEND Service Manager	SEND Services
SEND Transport Manager	Travel Assistance Team
SEND Travel Coordinator	Travel Assistance Team

- 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 Senior Transport Officer presenting to Panel are:

1. A brief presentation taken from the one-sided precis of the case taken from the panel sheet
2. 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/carer 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?