



Southwark Travel Assistance Policy 2024

Policy Statement

Southwark Council is committed to ensuring that children and young people have access to good quality travel information and arrangements, which promote their independence, well-being and will be of greatest benefit to the environment.

Most children and young people living in Southwark do not receive or require travel assistance to get from home to school or their place of learning. Generally, Southwark Council believes that the majority of children and young people will be able to walk or, travel on free public bus transport, to school. We recognise however, that not all children and young people will be able to do so without additional support.

Southwark Council has developed the single transport policy that sets out the eligibility criteria for assistance at each phase of education, from primary school through to further education. The policy explains how we make eligibility decisions, the types of travel arrangements available, and how parents/carers/young people may appeal against decisions.

Where a child or young person meets the criteria for travel assistance, Southwark Council will seek to put in place the most appropriate, sustainable and cost-effective arrangements. This single policy enables the Council to take a clear and consistent approach when considering requests for travel assistance.

The Council is committed to reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing the environmental impact of vehicle journeys by promoting the use of alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and use of integrated public transport. In this regard, the Council has adopted the principles contained in its Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy and works closely with schools to develop School Travel Plans that help to achieve this aim.

The Council developed the policy using a joint approach with key partners: parents/carers; schools/colleges; disability groups; sustainable travel; travel safety officers and Transport for London. It has also had full regard to the Department of Education's *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (July 2014)*, and their *Post-16 Transport to Education and Training (2019)* – link below:

[\(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training>)

Contents

<u>Section 1</u>	Page
• Introduction	5
• Who this policy is for	6
• Travel assistance for children under compulsory school age – aged under 5	7
• Travel Assistance for children at primary or secondary school (aged 5 to 16)	8-9
• Post 16 Policy Statement	10
• Travel Assistance for young people of sixth form age (aged 16 to 18), without Special Educational Needs	11
• Travel Assistance for young people of sixth form age (aged 16 to 18), with Special Educational Needs	12
• Travel Assistance for young adults aged 19 and over and under 25, who have an EHCP	13
 <u>Section 2</u>	
• Exceptional Circumstances	15-16
 <u>Section 3</u>	
• Types of travel assistance available	19-21
• Additional post 16 travel concessions and discounts	22-25
• The application process	26
• Reviewing eligibility and/or the type of travel assistance offered	27-28
• Southwark's Independent Travel Training Programme	29-30
• Circumstances where Southwark Council will NOT normally provide travel assistance	31
• How to appeal a travel assistance decision	32-33
• How to feedback about the service provided by Southwark Council	34
• Further advice and information	35-36
• Glossary	37-38

SECTION 1

Introduction

Parents/carers are responsible for making sure their child attends their education provision. This includes arranging any necessary travel arrangements to and from school and/or accompanying their child as necessary.

In most cases the council expects that children and young people will be able to walk to school, college or other place of education or, to use Transport for London's (TfL's) free London bus scheme for journeys that are a bit further away.

Passes for London's free bus scheme can be **obtained** by:

- a. Visiting and downloading an application form from www.tfl.gov.uk, or;
- b. Calling into any underground station or ticket retailer for an application form

The council will always aim to support children to walk or use public transport independently by the age of 16, or earlier if at all possible. Where travel assistance is provided, and to support their travel independence, regular reviews will take place at key stages of the child's/young person's progression through the education system. We expect families to support us in this aim.

When assessing applications for travel assistance, the council will have due regard to any relevant protected characteristics of the child/young person/applicant, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Please turn to the section(s) of this policy for the age group relevant to you or your child/young person/adult, to find out more about travel assistance criteria that will be applied for their age group.

Southwark's Travel Assistance Policy will be reviewed annually.

Who this policy is for

This single policy is for eligible children, young people and young adults in the following groups (this includes those who are *Looked After* by the council but not necessarily living in Southwark):

- a. Children living in Southwark who under compulsory school age - aged under 5
- b. Children living in Southwark who are at primary or secondary school – aged 5 to 16
- c. Young people living in Southwark of sixth form age and in education - aged 16 to 18
- d. Young adults living in Southwark aged 19 and over and under 25, in education and with an EHCP

Travel assistance for children under compulsory school age – aged under 5

There is no legal requirement for the council to provide travel assistance to and from school/nursery for children **under compulsory school age (under the age of 5)**. The council expects parents/carers to take the child to school/nursery.

In exceptional circumstances, the council may agree to travel assistance applications for children who are under compulsory school age. Each application will be considered and decided on its own merits. As an example, the council may decide that a child should receive travel assistance if because of their needs, they are unable to walk or travel by public transport, accompanied and there is no other transportation available to them.

For an application form, please refer to page 26.

Travel assistance for children at primary or secondary school (aged 5 to 16)

Eligibility criteria:

a) Children of primary or secondary school age, are eligible for travel assistance (free of charge), if their nearest suitable school is:

- A distance from home of more than 2 miles if the child is below 8
- A distance from home of more than 3 miles if the child is between 8 and 16

Ordinarily, the expectation is that children that meet these criteria will take advantage of Transport for London's free bus scheme. When a child reached 8 years of age and has previously received travel assistance on the grounds of distance, assistance will be withdrawn if they live less than 3 miles from school. This is normally from the beginning of term after their 8th birthday.

b) Children of primary or secondary school age will be eligible for free transport under 'extended rights' where the pupil is entitled to free school meals, or their parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit (with an earned income of no more than £7,400) and:

- The nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles from home (for children who have reached the age of 8 but are not 11);
- The school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable schools closer to home);
- The school is between 2 and 15 miles from home and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (if aged 11 -16).

Ordinarily, the expectation is that children that are eligible under the extended rights criteria will take advantage of Transport for London's free bus scheme.

c) Children of primary or secondary school age, attending the nearest suitable school, and who have a special educational need, disability or mobility problems, and who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of these problems or associated health and safety issues related to them, will

be eligible for assistance. Children that fall within this category will have their eligibility assessed on an individual basis.

- d) Travel assistance will be provided if the nearest suitable school is nearer to home than 2 miles (for children under 8 years old) or 3 miles (for children over 8 years old) but the child cannot reasonably be expected to walk the route because it is deemed by the Travel Assistance Team to be unsafe to walk, either accompanied or unaccompanied..

Travel assistance will be provided for any children being educated in alternative arrangements¹ where they are eligible in accordance with the statutory provisions.

Consideration will be given to providing travel assistance for children who do not meet the eligibility criteria, but where there are exceptional circumstances as set out in Section 2.

¹ In accordance with section 19 of Education Act 1996

Post-16 Policy Statement

Southwark Council has a duty to publish an annual post-16 transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport so that students who live in Southwark and who are of sixth form age (aged 16-18) are able to access the education and training of their choice. For young people with EHC plans this includes students up to age 25 where they are continuing on a course started before their 19th birthday. This policy is set out in the following pages.

Local Authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel assistance but must specify the arrangements for the provision of transport or their assistance that they consider it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training or for adults over 19 but under 25 who have an EHC plan. Those arrangements are set out in this policy document.

Travel assistance for young people of sixth form age (aged 16 to 18) without Special Educational Needs

Ordinarily, young people of sixth form age, without SEN, will be expected to take advantage of the discounts and concessionary fares that are available to them from Transport for London and individual education and training providers. Details of concessions and discounts are available on pages 22 to 25.

Exceptional cases will be considered in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 2.

In considering any application for travel assistance, where relevant, the council will look at whether it is reasonable for a young person to choose a place of learning or training that is not the closest to where he/she lives.

Travel assistance for young people of sixth form age (aged 16 to 18), with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Those young people with special educational needs and disabilities, who have been in receipt of travel assistance prior to turning 16 years of age, will have to re-apply for assistance before moving into Year 12. This is regardless of whether they are remaining at the same school or not. Consideration of assistance will not be restricted to those young people who had been assessed as having a particular travel need prior to the age of 16. If a travel need arises at 16 or post 16, while the young person is in full time education, an application for assistance can be put to the council for consideration.

Wherever possible, young people with SEND are expected to travel, either accompanied or unaccompanied, to their education provision by walking or taking advantage of Transport for London's free public buses, or concessionary fares on other forms of transport.

Decisions on the provision of travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis and applications should be made under the Exceptional Circumstances criteria, as set out in Section 2 of this policy. In most cases young people with special educational needs and disabilities are expected to progress towards more independent travel training. If the young person was in receipt of assistance prior to Year 12, there is no automatic right to it continuing.

In considering any application for travel assistance, where relevant, the council will look at whether it is reasonable for a young person to choose a place of learning or training that is not the closest to where he/she lives.

In any case where a place of learning or training is named in section I of a young person's EHCP, due regard will be given to any travel assistance the young person or their family already has available to them, including any indications provided during SEN Tribunal proceedings.

While this is not currently in operation, Southwark Council is exploring ways in which a charging mechanism could be put in place for those aged between 16 to 18, and their parents.

Travel assistance for young adults aged 19 and over and under 25, who have an EHCP

There is no automatic entitlement to travel assistance once a young adult with an EHCP turns 19 years old. Any assistance provided prior to the young adult turning 19 will cease unless they are remaining on a course started prior to their 19th birthday. A new application will need to be submitted once the young adult turns 19 and is starting a new course.

If the young person has SEND and started their course before their 19th birthday, the council will consider their application under the criteria for 16 to 18 year olds.

Applications for travel assistance for 19 to 25 year olds with an EHCP, starting a new course, will be considered against the following criteria:

- The young adult has the most severe disabilities and is unable to walk or travel by public transport, even when accompanied, and has no other means of transportation available to assist with them getting to their provision.
- The young person is attending residential/boarding provision set out in the EHCP that was arranged by the authority, and which is outside of the Further and Higher Education sector, and was started after the young person's 19th birthday.

Those eligible under these criteria will be provided with support free of charge.

In considering any such request, due regard will be given to any travel assistance the young person or their family already has available to them, including any indications provided during SEN Tribunal proceedings.

For an application form, please refer to page 26.

SECTION 2

Exceptional Circumstances

Factors included under exceptional circumstances

Applications for travel assistance under Exceptional Circumstances will be assessed on a case by case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances and the impact travel assistance will have on the educational outcomes of the child or young person.

The period for which travel assistance is awarded under the Exceptional Circumstances will be dependent on the individual circumstances of the applicant, and may be for a fixed time period, or ongoing with an agreed review frequency.

Due regard will always be given to any preference an individual may have for a particular institution based on their religion or belief and any special educational needs or disability the child or young person has.

The following factors will be taken into account in assessing applications for travel assistance under Exceptional Circumstances. This list is not exhaustive and applications are not limited to these factors. Applications relating to these factors will not automatically be awarded assistance. Third party views that state that the child/young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk or travel by public transport, will be given very little consideration and weight unless they are supported with evidence which explains why, in their professional opinion, the child/young person cannot reasonably be expected to walk/travel by public transport, accompany if necessary.

For children below statutory school age

- Evidence of SEND in children below statutory school age, which results in the child not being able to walk or travel by public transport accompanied and where there is no other form of transportation available to them.

For children and young people of sixth form age

- A parent/carer's special needs or medical condition that may prevent them from being able to accompany the child/young person and it is reasonable to expect that the child/young person requires accompaniment.
- Health and safety risks to the child/young person or others that are likely to apply if he/she travelled to school/college without support, and it is reasonable to expect that the child/young person requires support.

For young people of sixth form age

- The needs of those for whom it would not be reasonably practicable to access education or training provision if no arrangements were made.
- The need to ensure that young people have reasonable opportunities to choose between different establishments at which education and training is provided.
- The distance from the learner's home to any establishments of education and training.
- The journey time in accessing establishments of education and learning.
- The costs in accessing establishments of education and learning.

Evidence required when submitting a claim based on a child/young person's medical conditions where they do not have SEN

Recent written evidence from medical consultant must be provided stating:

- What medical or mental health condition the child/young person has and how this affects their ability to walk/travel to/from school/other education establishment
- The child/young person cannot walk/travel to/from school/other education establishment
- How long the situation is likely to last

Evidence required when submitting a claim based on parent/carer's medical condition

Recent written evidence must be provided from a hospital consultant (or other appropriate independent professional) stating that the parent/carer is unable to accompany their child/young person who requires accompaniment to/from school/other educational establishment. The written evidence must include:

- What medical or mental health condition the parent/carer has where they are the only adult responsible for taking the child/young person to school/other educational establishment and how this affects their ability to accompany the child/young person to/from school/other educational provision

- Confirmation that the sole parent/carer responsible for taking a child/young person to school cannot walk/travel the distance to/from school/other educational provision
- How long the situation is likely to last.

SECTION 3

Types of travel assistance available

Types of travel assistance available for children under compulsory school age and compulsory school aged children (5 to 16 year olds)

The council's Travel Assistance Team will decide on the type of travel support provided to eligible children/ of compulsory school age. They will take into account information and advice from relevant professionals, and information recorded in the EHCP if relevant. Ordinarily, they will also arrange to meet with the child and their parent/carer, and this may involve an assessment for Independent Travel Training. Wherever possible, the Travel Assistance Team will also choose a travel option that improves the physical well being and independence of those who use them and/or the environmental well being of the borough.

The types of assistance that can be considered include:

- a) **Information and advice:** The Travel Assistance Team will provide advice on safe routes to travel, and how to travel safely.
- b) **Independent Travel Training:** Students in Year 6 and above with Special Educational Needs/Disabilities will be assessed for independent travel training. The training provides children/young people with the confidence to travel safely and independently to their education provision. If the council does not consider a child ready for Independent Travel Training, they will, inform the parent/carer when this will be reviewed. Please refer to pages 29 to 30 for more information about the travel training programme and assessment process
- c) **Travel Card:** A travel card can help an adult accompany a child/young person to school/place of learning on public transport.
- d) **Cycle loan scheme:** The cycle loan scheme is available for those aged 16 and over and who live and study in Southwark. For £10, a bike can be borrowed for a month. Included are a helmet, bike lock and high visibility vest.
- e) **Free cyclist training sessions:** The council offers training to beginners, or those wanting to get back on the road, as well as having specially adapted bikes available for training children/young people with SEND. They also recommend suitable cycle routes for children and young people.

- f) **Free children's scooter training:** The council offers training to children whose parents wish them to use a scooter to travel to school.
- g) **Personal Budget:** Parents/carers may receive a Personal Budget to enable them to make their own arrangements for the child/young person to get to school/college. The number of miles the child/young person lives from their school/college determines the amount provided. If there is more than one child attending the same school, and both are eligible for a Personal Budget, the amount for the second and subsequent children will be reduced. Occasionally, the council may provide a fixed Personal Budget towards a local taxi arranged by the parent/carer.
- h) **Vehicles:** Exceptionally, the council may transport children/young people in taxis or private hire vehicles. The decision to do this will be based on an assessment of needs. Where a vehicle is provided, it will be scheduled to drop off and pick up **at the start and end of the school/college day**. Travel arrangements for children with special educational needs, disability of mobility problems can be particularly complex to make. Shorter journeys may be particularly desirable, perhaps because a child's special educational needs or disability mean they become distressed while travelling, but a child may need to travel a long way to school that is able to meet their needs and one vehicle may need to collect several children.

Types of travel assistance available for eligible sixth form aged students (16 to 18 year olds)

Where a young person of sixth form age meets the exceptional cases criteria for assistance, there is no automatic right to a place in council provided transport, even if they previously had a place. The offer and type of post 16 assistance remains at the discretion of the council. All eligible sixth form applicants will automatically be assessed for Independent Travel Training.

If, because of their needs, the council decides an eligible sixth form applicant is not ready for Independent Travel Training, they will, in most cases, provide the parent/carer with a payment to enable them to make arrangements to get their child to and from their place of learning. As an example, a payment could cover the cost of driving the young person to their place of learning, the cost of a local taxi, paying someone else to take your child, paying for childcare for other children while the parent/carer accompanied their child to their school/college. If the council do not consider this to be a cost effective option, they will make an alternative offer.

If the council concludes that a direct payment suits the young person's needs, and is the most cost effective option, it will be for parents to demonstrate to the council why they believe council provided transport is the only viable option for their child. The

council will consider any exceptional circumstances advised on a case by case basis. Some examples that the council would **not** ordinarily see as exceptional (in their own right):

- Single parent families
- Parent(s) that work
- Having other children to look after and/or at other schools
- Parents/students unable to drive or having access to a car
- Students in wheelchairs

If the council decides there is no basis to offer a young person a place on council provided transport, the parent/carer will be able to pay for a place to enable their child to travel in a council vehicle (on the condition there is a round in place and an available seat). The cost will depend on the type of vehicle they will be travelling in, for example, a place on a council contracted bus typically costs £142 per week per child/young person. The council will deduct from this amount what the costs would have been had the parent/carer taken up their alternative offer.

Additional Post 16 Travel Concessions and Discounts

16+ Zip Oyster Photocard

Young people aged 16 or 17 on 31 August who live in a London borough can get free bus and tram travel. Londoners aged 18 on 31 August who are still in full time education can also apply for a 16+ Zip Oyster photocard that gives free bus and tram travel.

For details of how to apply, please visit:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/zip-oyster-photocards>

The 16-19 Bursary Fund

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

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

1. A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups below:

- in care
- care leavers
- in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right
- in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment

2. Discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment

To be eligible for the discretionary bursary young people must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August or

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

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

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

Young parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while you are learning.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

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

The childcare provider must be Ofsted registered and can be a:

- childminder
- pre-school playgroup
- day nursery
- out of school club

- taking your child to the childcare provider

If your child needs specialist childcare, the provider must also be on the Care Quality Commission's register for specialist provision.

If you want a relative to get Care to Learn for looking after your child they need to be both:

- providing registered childcare for children they're not related to
- living apart from you and your child

Childcare payments go directly to your childcare provider. Before your childcare provider can be paid:

- your childcare provider needs to confirm your child's attendance
- your school or college needs to confirm that you're attending your course

Payments for travel costs go to your school or college – they will either pay you or arrange travel for you.

Payments will stop if:

- you stop attending your course
- you finish your course
- your child stops attending childcare

You can get Care to Learn if:

- you are a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you are the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you are either a British citizen or a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country
- your course is publicly funded (check with your school or college)
- your childcare provider is registered with Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission

Care to Learn is only available for courses in England that have some public funding. This includes courses that take place in:

- schools

- school sixth forms
- sixth form colleges
- other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning
- your community at Children's Centres

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

For more information please visit <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/how-to-claim>

The application process

Applications for travel assistance are dealt with by the council's Travel Assistance Team. Applications for those starting school for the first time in September, transferring to secondary school, or transitioning from Year 11 to 12, should be made by the LAST FRIDAY OF JUNE that same year. We cannot guarantee that assistance will be in place at the beginning of September for eligible children/young whose applications were received after the deadline.

The process once the Travel Assistance Team receives a completed application for travel assistance is outlined below.

Stage One

- When the Travel Assistance Team receives an application for assistance, they will send an acknowledgement within three working days of receipt. This will be quicker if the application is submitted electronically.

Stage Two

- The Travel Assistance Team will look at whether the child/young person should get travel assistance. They will do this by looking at the information given in the application and the child's/young person's EHCP/Annual Review against the eligibility criteria. If they do not have enough information to make a decision, they will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and/or school and/or arrange to accompany the child/young person on public transport or walking. If the parent/carer refuses to engage in this process, a decision will be made on the information available.
- The Travel Assistance Team will write to the applicant with their decision. If they have decided that the child is not eligible for assistance, they will explain the reasons why.
- If travel assistance has been agreed, the Travel Assistance Team will explain to the parent/carer or young person about the type of travel assistance that will be given. In making a decision about the type of assistance, the Travel Assistance Team may need to gather more information from the parent/carer or young adult, the school and/or the child's/young adult's EHCP co-ordinator.
- The Travel Assistance Team aims to complete stage two of the process within 20 working days of acknowledging an application for assistance.

Reviewing eligibility and/or the type of travel assistance offered

Periodically, the Travel Assistance Team will review eligibility and/or the type of assistance the child/young person is receiving. Reviews are carried out because as a child/young person gets older, their needs can change. The Travel Assistance Team needs to ensure that the type of assistance in place remains appropriate to meet needs and/or to look at ways in assisting the child/young to achieve independence. For the majority of children, this will be when they are in Year 9, and once post-16, this will usually be annually. The review may involve meeting with the parent/carer and/or accompanying the child/young person on public transport, or walking with them. It may also involve seeking information from the school and other relevant professional bodies. If the parent/carer refuses to engage in this process, a decision will be made on the information available. In some cases, the review may result in the withdrawal of assistance or a change in the type of assistance provided. Whenever possible, the Travel Assistance Team will look towards the child/young person progressing towards more independent travel.

New applications need to be submitted to the Travel Assistance Team:

- Whenever there is change of school/educational establishment
- When a child moves from primary education to secondary education (only need to re-apply if the child is physically moving to another school or another site). *Applications must be received by the **last Friday of June** to guarantee travel assistance will be in place for eligible children by the first day of term in September if agreed.*
- When a young person finishes Year 11, but is remaining in education. *Applications must be received by the **last Friday of June** to guarantee travel assistance will be in place for eligible young people by the first day of term in September if agreed.*
- When a young person has turned 19 and is starting a new course, and thereafter when ever they change course. *Applications must be received by the **last Friday of June** to guarantee travel assistance will be in place for eligible young people by the first day of term in September if agreed.*

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the Travel Assistance Team when the child/young person has changed home address. They may decide to re-assess

the child's/young person's eligibility or the assistance offered as a result of the change.

Southwark's Independent Travel Training Programme

Independent Travel Training provides young people with Special Educational Needs the skills and confidence to make the home to school journey independently by walking or on public transport.

There are many benefits for young people after completing the programme:

- Increased confidence and independence
- Decreased reliance on specialist transport and parents/carers
- Improved contribution at school/college
- More opportunities to go out with friends and join clubs
- More opportunities to go to college or find a job

The programme takes approximately six weeks, but this is dependent on the young person and their individual needs. Each young person has a Travel Trainer, who completes four modules of training with them:

- Learning the journey and foundation travel skills
- Personal safety and problem solving
- Journey practice and learning alternative routes
- Building confidence and becoming independent

Over time and when they are ready, the young person will complete more of the journey on their own until they are travelling safely and independently.

The Travel Assistance Team will assess a young person's suitability for training at the following stages:

- Year 6 – children already in receipt of assistance who have low level needs
- Year 7 onwards – all new applications received and who are assessed as eligible for assistance will have their suitability for the programme determined
- Year 9 onwards – all those in Year 9 and in receipt of assistance will have their suitability for the programme reviewed, and thereafter annually, if appropriate to do so

The Travel Assistance Team will follow a three stage process in determining suitability for the programme. Progression through the stages is dependent on the outcome of the previous stage:

- Stage 1 – consideration of latest EHCP/Annual Review to determine whether needs likely to prevent participation on programme. If appropriate, other

professional bodies involved with child may be approached for their view on suitability

- Stage 2 – Meeting with parent/carer and child/young person to discuss travel needs

At the end of each stage, the Travel Assistance Team will make a decision on suitability. They will explain the rationale for their decision in writing to the parent/carer and if appropriate, the school/college. If a parent/carer does not agree with the decision, they may appeal.

Circumstances where Southwark Council will NOT normally provide travel assistance

- a. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure their child attends school/educational establishment. This includes arranging any necessary travel to and from school/educational establishment or accompanying their child as necessary. If the child lives within the statutory walking distance and is only able to walk to school/educational establishment if accompanied, there is an expectation that the parent/carer will accompany them. When assessing eligibility for assistance, the Travel Assistance Team will consider whether there are good reasons why the parent/carer, or someone chosen by them, is unable to accompany their child. If there are good reasons, assistance will be provided under exceptional circumstances. Parents working patterns or caring responsibilities are not considered good reasons. Once a young person is aged 18 or over, whilst the council does not have a duty to provide or pay for someone to accompany a young person to their education provision, each case will be considered on its own merit.
- b. If it is the parent/carer's choice to send their child to a school that is further away from home than a nearer suitable school, the parent/carer is expected to arrange travel for the child and pay any associated costs.
- c. The Travel Assistance Team only normally provides assistance to and from school or a place of learning at the start and end of the school's or place of learning day. The Travel Assistance Team is not able to consider requests to transport children/young people to breakfast clubs, after-school clubs or school trips.
- d. If the council receives an application for a child/young person that has already successfully completed the travel training programme, they will not normally be eligible for assistance. The council will consider any exceptional circumstances advised for individuals on a case by case basis.
- e. If a place of learning or training is named in Section I of a young person's Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), and the child/young person or their family indicated (either in the plan or in an SEN tribunal proceedings) that they will provide travel assistance to the child/young person to enable them to attend, the Council may consider this when assessing an application for travel assistance and it may be taken as grounds for refusing an application.

- f. A child may be eligible because of temporary mobility problems but, due to the short-term nature of some mobility problems, it may not always be practicable for the local authority to make travel arrangements before the child has recovered.

How to appeal a travel assistance decision

(Please note that there is a different process for feeding back about the service of the Travel Assistance Team have provided – refer to Page 34).

A decision can be appealed by completing and returning, to the Travel Assistance Team within 20 working days of the decision, an appeal form. The form should be used to explain the reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

While the appeal process is open no new travel assistance will be given or no changes will be made to existing arrangements.

Appeal forms can be obtained by phoning 020 7525 5121. They can also be found on the council's website at:

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2204/free_school_transport

Once the Travel Assistance Team receives the appeal form, the following steps will be taken:

Stage one

- An acknowledgement letter will be sent within three working days.
- An officer will put together the information that the decision was based upon. An Assistant Director of the Education Department will look at that information alongside the reasons for appeal.
- An Assistant Director of the Education Department will write, with a decision, within 20 working days of receiving the appeal form. The decision will explain whether the appeal was upheld or not. If the appeal is upheld, they will explain how matters will be put right.

Stage two

- If unhappy with the Assistant Director's decision, the Travel Assistance Team must be written to within 20 working days, explaining the reasons for disagreeing with that decision. That letter will be acknowledged within three working days.
- An officer will put together all the information the original and stage one appeal decisions were based on. This information will be considered by a panel comprising three independent members, one of whom is independent of the council, and all of whom will have had no previous involvement with the case.
- Within 40 working days of requesting a stage two appeal, a member of the panel will write with their decision. If the appeal is upheld, they will explain how matters will be put right within 5 working days of their decision.

Stage three

- If unhappy with the way the stage one and stage two appeals have been handled, a complaint can be put to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- This must be done within 12 months of becoming aware of the matters that gave cause to the complaint – in most cases this will be 12 months from the date of the original decision.
- The Local Government Ombudsman contact details are:
 - 0300 061 0614
 - www.lgo.org.uk

Following an unsuccessful appeal, the Travel Assistance Team will not accept a further application for travel assistance for the same child unless there has been a material change in the child's circumstances.

How to feedback about the service provided by Southwark Council

(Please note that requests to appeal a travel assistance decision follow a different process – refer to pages 32 to 33).

Whatever decision is made on a case, the Travel Assistance Team wants to give the best possible level of customer service.

If you would like to tell us about your experience of the service (good or bad), you can do so by contacting the Social Care and Education Complaints Team by any of the following means:

www.southwark.gov.uk/childrenservicescomplaints

email: sscomplaints@southwark.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7525 3681

By post to:

Customer Resolutions Team (Social Care and Education)
FREEPOST, RTJL-XAZG-ZRTU
2nd Floor, Hub B. 160 Tooley Street
PO Box 64529
London
SE1P 5LX

Further advice and information

Application form

- Applications can be completed and submitted online at <http://www.southwark.gov.uk/schools-and-education/information-for-parents/financial-support/travel-assistance>
- Hard copy application forms can be downloaded by following the same link as above

When following the links, please be aware that there is a separate application form for post aged 16.

- Completed hard copy application forms can emailed or posted to:
 - travelassistance@southwark.gov.uk
 - Travel Assistance Team
4th Floor, Hub 2
PO Box 64529
London, SE1P 5LX

Contact details

- **The Travel Assistance Team**

Telephone: 020 7525 5121

Email address: travelassistance@southwark.gov.uk

- **Southwark Information Advice and Support Team (SIAST)**

SIAST are available if people want support to complete the application form.
Their contact details are:

Telephone: 0207 525 3104

Email address: SIAS@southwark.gov.uk

- **16 to 19 Bursary Fund**

www.ypla.gov.uk/learnerssupport/16-19

- **Care to Learn**

www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview

- **Southwark Councils Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy**

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200107/transport_policy/2015/sustainable_modes_of_travel

- **Walking and cycling routes**

Recommended Southwark cycling routes (current and planned):

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/cycle_routes

Recommended Southwark walking routes

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/10096/healthy_living/890/organised_group_walks_throughout_southwark

- **Places in Southwark that offer specialist and post-16 education**

Special schools

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200226/special_educational_needs/1914/sen_schools

Post-16

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/200561/16_education_employment_and_training

Glossary

- **Aged 5 to 16:** pupils attending reception up to, and including, year 11.
- **Aged 16 to 18 of sixth form age:** young people in year 12 and 13 (or equivalent) up to the age of 18 (or age 19 if continuing a course that was started before their 19th birthday).
- **Special educational need/disability:** refers to children who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.
- **Learning disability:** a general term that refers to individuals who find it harder to learn, understand and communicate.
- **Learning difficulty:** refers to individuals who have specific problems with learning as a result of either medical, emotional or language problems.
- **Independent travel training:** personalised training to teach a child/young person to travel to and from school or their place of learning.
- **Qualifying school:** A community foundation or voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school. A community or foundation special school. A school approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. A pupil referral unit. A city technology college, a city college for the technology of the arts, an Academy school or an alternative provision academy.
- **Nearest suitable school:** 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 SEN that the child may have.

- **Home:** a child's 'home' is the place where he/she is habitually and normally resident.
- **Appeal:** Someone appeals when they disagree with the way in which a decision was made. The reasons for appeal are looked at by someone in higher authority than the original decision maker. That person will decide whether the original decision should change or not.
- **Place of learning for young adults of sixth form age:**

Schools;

Any institution maintained or assisted by the authority which provides further education or higher education (or both);

Any institution within the further education sector;

Any establishment (which is not a school or an institution maintained or assisted by the authority) which is supported by the Learning and Skills Council for England.