



POLICY DOCUMENT

**HOME TO SCHOOL OR COLLEGE
TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND
DISABILITY**



Document Control

Document Title: Home to School or College Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disability

Summary

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Related Policies, Strategies, Guideline Documents	Home to school travel and transport guidance: Statutory guidance for local authorities – July 2014 Post-16 transport to education and training: Statutory guidance for local authorities – February 2014
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Policy Owner (Name/Position)	Tracy Jubb – Senior Deputy Team Leader (SEN)
Policy Author (Name/Position)	Tracy Jubb & Sandra Blackmore (16-25 Lidd Lead Commissioning Officer)
Applies to	School aged children and young people in Post 16 education with special educational needs and/or a disability.

Review of Strategy

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Document Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version Number

HOME TO SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy outlines the travel support available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) living within the boundaries of Rochdale Borough to access education.

NB. For other categories of eligibility please refer to the Rochdale Borough Council website: <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/schools-and-education/Pages/school-college-travel-expenses.aspx>

1.2 This policy was developed in partnership with Bury and Oldham local authorities and in consultation with parents, carers, children and young people. Public consultation took place from 19 October 2015 until 11 December 2015. The recommendations from the consultation were presented to the Council Cabinet and were approved on 14 March 2016.

1.3 This policy was updated in August 2019 following legal advice to ensure the Local Authority remained legally compliant.

1.3 This policy applies to new applications for travel assistance from September 2016 onwards. Existing service users will not be affected by the change in policy unless there is a change of placement.

1.4 The aim of the Council's travel assistance policy is to ensure that all children and young people should lead lives that are independent and as free from restriction as possible, thereby contributing to the achievement of five critical outcomes:

- Employment
- Independent living
- Good health
- Friends and relationships
- Community inclusion

1.3 The provision of travel assistance by the Council will be based on individual needs and circumstances and with 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 A

- Children attending a mainstream or special school with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Children attending a mainstream school or specialist unit within a mainstream school who have additional learning or mobility difficulties without an Education, Health and Care Plan.

SECTION B

- Young people 16 to 25 years with SEND as detailed within section B

SECTION C

- Appeals procedure

SECTION D

- Appendices of definitions and additional information about the terms used in this policy

1.5 Wherever possible, in the provision of travel assistance, the Council will consider travel options that lead to reducing the number and length of vehicle journeys.

1.6 This policy explains:

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

SECTION A

2. Section A of this policy relates to travel assistance for children with significant Special Educational Needs and Disability, which will usually mean those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. It may in exceptional circumstances apply to those who are undergoing assessment for an EHC plan or have been placed by the Local Authority in a school, to meet their SEN, which is not their local catchment school.

2.1 The majority of those children with an EHC Plan will not need or receive specialised travel assistance from the Council.

2.2 However, where it is not possible for a pupil to attend a school near to their home because the school is unable to meet their additional needs, travel assistance will be provided.

2.3 Travel assistance will be provided for children living within statutory walking distance of their school who, because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties, cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school¹.

2.3 In considering whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school, the Council will consider whether they can walk to school on their own or with someone to accompany them. The Council expects parents to either accompany a child to school themselves or to make arrangements for another adult to accompany them. Wherever possible, the Council expects parents/carers of children to make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as for parents/carers of children without an EHC

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

Plan or disabilities, as this is an important factor in developing independence, social and life skills.

2.4 The Council reserves the right to make an assessment to determine eligibility for travel assistance under this policy².

3. Other factors that may be taken into consideration when assessing a child's eligibility for assistance with travel.

3.1 Any disability of the parent/carer or the child. The local authority is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments if the usual application of this travel assistance policy places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled. For example, a disabled parent may not be able to accompany a child or young person to school, and adjustments may need to be made so that the child is eligible for assistance. A disabled pupil may need reasonable adjustments to be made to the kind of transport that is provided. In such cases, a parent/carer will be required to provide current medical evidence with their application. This will usually be in the form of an up-to-date letter or report from an appropriate medical professional.

3.2 Any other exceptional circumstances applicable to each case.

4. Factors not taken into consideration

4.1 When assessing eligibility for travel assistance, the Council, in common with other local authorities will generally not take the following factors into account:

4.1.1 Personal circumstances such as parents/ carers attending work, taking other children to other schools or looking after other children, unless there is a sibling or another child within the household with special educational needs or disability;

4.1.2 Parental preference for a school named in Section I of an EHC plan, where the local authority considers that there is a suitable school nearer to the child's home and that school is also named in Section I of a plan. In such cases it will be open to the Council to include reference to the parents/carers accepting responsibility for all travel arrangements to the preferred school, and associated costs, in Section I.

4.1.3 Travel assistance will not be provided for the following;

- 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
- respite and short break sessions

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

5. What travel assistance may be offered?

5.1 Once a child'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 identified needs of the individual child and will take account of the Council's duties to make the best use of its resources. It should be noted that the mode of travel assistance offered

² Section 508B, Education Act 1996.

will be reviewed at least annually and may change as the needs of the child changes, whilst continuing to ensure the best use of the Council's resources.

- 5.2 For children attending school on a daily basis, travel assistance will usually only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 The Council's policy on the provision of travel assistance for additional journeys in various circumstances is explained in Section D.
- 5.5 The Council will always consider forms of travel assistance that help to develop travel independence skills to enable children and young people to lead independent lives as they grow older.
- 5.6 The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to:
 - 5.6.1 **Independent travel training:** independent travel training, focuses on the needs and capabilities of the pupil, and is delivered through working closely with parents/carers and school staff. It can enhance the young person's confidence and independence by developing personal, social and life skills. Independent travel training will also develop young people's resilience and unlock the necessary skills to keep themselves safe when using public transport. Criteria for successful completion of the training will be based on an agreed comprehensive training programme and a copy of the final assessment will be provided to parents/carers. Successful completion of Independent Travel Training will be signed-off by the Council and parents/carers

All applications for travel assistance will be reviewed to determine if an assessment for independent travel training should take place. This assessment process is undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer and involves contributions from the child and their parents, school staff and other professionals. It is expected that where independent travel training is offered as a travel solution, this will be taken up.

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

- 5.6.2 **Travel pass:** To enable the child to travel to school accompanied, if necessary, by an adult via public transport solutions.
- 5.6.3 **Mileage rate** The council will reimburse parents a mileage rate if they choose to transport their child/young person to school in their own vehicle.
- 5.6.4 **Personal Travel Budget (PTB):** 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 suit the needs of their child and family. The sum provided will be at the discretion of the Council; it will be based on the distance travelled from home to school, and will not exceed the cost of direct provision of

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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 parents'/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.

5.6.5 Transport vehicles: Where assessed as essential, the Council may provide a vehicle to transport a child to and from school. Where transport vehicles are provided, these will be either Council vehicles and drivers or those provided by a suitably qualified and licensed commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. Children may be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home, in many cases from a recognised pick up and drop off point. A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to the child's significant need. Whenever possible, children will travel together in buses. 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. 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.

6. Vehicle transport service standards and provision of passenger assistants

- 6.1 The vehicle transport service provided by the Council for children will operate to the service standards described at Section D.
- 6.2 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 only be provided where they are necessary for the safe operation of vehicles and/or the care of children. A Passenger Assistant will not necessarily be provided simply because the pupil is school-aged or because he/she does not know the driver. If necessary a risk assessment would be completed to determine if a Passenger Assistant was required.
- 6.3 Assistance with travel will be provided to meet the needs of a child but there may be circumstances when the transport will need to be reviewed as it is not working. While it is acknowledged that the child has SEND and this may impact upon their behaviour, if the conduct of the child 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 the family to try to find another travel solution for the child. (See Section D).

7. Application and assessment process (all applicants)

- 7.1 Applications for travel assistance will be given full consideration to the specific needs of the child. Where it is decided travel assistance is appropriate 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.
- 7.2 The application process is dealt with in three stages.

Stage 1: Application

For a child with an EHC Plan, the Council will undertake an initial assessment of travel requirements based on the school placement proposed. Where this assessment indicates that the child is not eligible for travel assistance, parents/carers will be advised accordingly and will have a right to appeal against this decision (see Section C).

For all applicants, the parent/carer must make a formal application for travel assistance before any assistance is considered. Supplementary evidence of the child's need for travel assistance should be provided by parents/carers at this stage. Application forms can be obtained from the Council website or by telephoning the EHC Assessment and Review Team on 01706 925981. Applications will be acknowledged within five working days on receipt of the application. An initial evaluation of the application will then determine whether assistance is likely to be approved, declined or whether further assessment is required. The parent/carer will be informed in writing of the outcome of the application.

Stage 2: Assessment

This stage will include the evaluation of written evidence and family circumstances. It could lead to an assessment for independent travel training which would include a home visit, consultation with the child, their school and any other relevant specialists.

This initial evaluation will normally be completed within fifteen working days following Stage 1 depending on the complexity of the circumstances. If further evidence is required or an assessment for independent travel training needs to be undertaken, this may delay the process and parents/carers will be notified in writing within ten working days. It is possible at this stage that the application may be declined and parents/carers may appeal against such a decision if they wish.

Stage 3: Implementation

Where the Council agrees to provide travel assistance it will also decide what type of travel assistance would be suitable and appropriate to meet the needs of the child. The parent/carer will be requested to sign an agreement before the travel assistance is provided and the agreed assistance will normally be implemented within ten working days following the completion of the assessment stage or the start of the new placement. If a parent/carer does not accept the travel assistance offered by the Council, their application will be withdrawn and they will need to take responsibility for their child's attendance at school themselves.

If travel assistance is granted 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 travel assistance process you have the right to appeal as detailed in Section C.

8 Travel Assistance Reviews

- 8.1 All children's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed regularly and at least annually. For children with EHC Plans, their continued eligibility for travel assistance will be discussed at the child's school as part of the annual review of the EHC plan. Parents/carers should attend the review in order to consider whether or not travel assistance continues to be appropriate. Where travel assistance has been granted on a

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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 it may result in travel assistance being withdrawn. Parents/carers will be informed of all decisions in writing, including notification of the right to appeal.

- 8.2 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 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.
- 8.3 Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next half school term / school term or sooner where possible.

Cessation of Support

- 8.4 The Council will review and remove travel assistance where the child's individual circumstances have changed and either the child is no longer eligible for support, or the child has been assessed as not requiring such support. Assistance may also cease on the request of the parent/carer who may have made alternative arrangements for their child's travel to school.

Section B Post 16 Travel

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.
2. In line with the Local Authority'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. In line with the Children and Families Act 2014 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.
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.rochdale.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/policies-strategies-and-reviews/policies/children-and-young-people/Pages/16-19-transport-policy.aspx>
5. Travel assistance may be provided for young people over 16 years with SEN and disability who are attending a full time course at the nearest provision to their home. Where an out of area provider is named on an EHC Plan and the Local Authority is satisfied that local provision can meet need, travel to and from the provider will be the responsibility of the young person and/or their family. Home and college travel assistance may be provided but passenger assistants would only be provided in exceptional cases and would be based on assessment of need. Travel assistance is not available for young people undertaking a residential course.
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.
7. The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to:
 - 7.1 **Independent Travel Training**, All young people will be supported and encouraged to travel independently to and from college, when it is assessed as reasonable for them to do so. This assessment process is undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer in partnership with the young person and their parents, college staff and other professionals. It is expected that where independent travel training is offered as a travel solution, a young person will take up this offer.

³ **Section 509AC of the Education Act 1996 defines persons of sixth form age for the purposes of the sixth form transport duty.**

Top up training will be available to support young people with transition when moving educational settings.

- 8.2 **Personal Travel Budget (PTB)**, it may be possible for the Council to provide the young person or their parent/carers with an amount of money to enable them to provide personalised travel arrangements. The sum provided will be at the discretion of the Council; it will be based on the distance travelled from home to college and will not exceed the cost of direct provision of transport by the Council, or a share of the cost where the young person would otherwise travel with other students in a shared vehicle. It is the young person or their parent/carers' responsibility to ensure that travel arrangements made by them are safe and accessible and that college attendance is maintained. A PTB can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.
- 8.3 **Supported public transport**; it may be possible for a young person to travel on public transport if the young person has some assistance. Where parents/carers are unable to accompany their son/daughter themselves, they may wish to provide a personal assistant or college may be able to arrange for one of their peers to act as a travel buddy. The young person would be eligible for free travel by using their concessionary pass from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM).
- 8.4 **Travel vehicles**, in exceptional circumstances the Council may provide a vehicle to transfer a student from home to college. Wherever possible young people will travel together and they may be collected and dropped off at a convenient location, within reasonable distance of their home. A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to the young person's significant needs. If a young person requires a passenger assistant on their journey this will be the responsibility of the parents / carers.

SECTION C Appeals

If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the Council, or the parent/carer or young person disagrees with the type of assistance being offered, parent/carers or young people have a right of appeal. The appeal should be made in writing within fifteen days of the decision letter being received.

Appeals are administered in two stages:

Stage 1: Review by Head of Service or equivalent

Within five working days of the appeal form being received, the parent/carer or young person will be sent confirmation that their appeal has been received and that their appeal is under review.

Further evidence may be requested to support the appeal and consultation with case workers and professional bodies may be required. Stage 1 appeals are decided by the Head of the Children and Young People's Additional Needs Service. A decision letter will be issued within twenty days of the appeal form being received.

Stage 2: Independent Panel - Independent Review of Evidence

If the parent/carer or young person remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they should notify the Council in writing within 20 days of receiving their Stage 1 appeal decision making clear the grounds on which they still wish to appeal.

The appeal will then be considered independently of the Children and Young People's Additional Needs Service and will involve consideration of all evidence gathered and the reasons for the decision being made. This will be undertaken by the multi-agency "Independent Panel," independent of the process to date and suitably experienced; this may include participation by head teachers from primary and secondary schools and members from the community and voluntary sector such as Barnardo's.

Parents/carers or the young person should receive their decision letter within forty days of their appeal being received.

This decision is the final stage of the Council's appeal procedure in relation to travel assistance. If parents/carers or the young person remain dissatisfied they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Details can be provided by the Council if necessary.

During the appeals process no new travel assistance will be provided or, in the case of existing arrangements, no change will be implemented.

If after the appeal, travel assistance is agreed, it will commence from the date of the letter sent to the parent/carer or young person informing them of the outcome of the appeal. No backdated payments will be made nor will the Council accept any claims by parents/carers for costs incurred (e.g. for making alternative travel arrangements during the process of appeal).

Complaints

Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the provision of the service should be made in the first instance to the EHC Assessment and Review Team.

All complaints on the process for assessing eligibility for travel assistance will be handled through the Council's formal complaints process. Full details are available on the Council website. Complaints regarding the outcome of the assessment process will be addressed as



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part of the appeals process as described above. <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/contact-us/complaints-and-compliments/pages/com-procedure.aspx>

SECTION D:

1. Legislation and responsibilities relating to home to school travel

- 1.1 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly under s.444 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended). This includes arranging any necessary travel to and from school and/or accompanying their child as necessary. No dispensation will be made for parents who are working at the time their children travel to and from school or who take other children to other schools at the time their children travel to and from school. In both cases parents are expected to make other suitable arrangements for someone else to accompany their children as necessary.

The Council has a duty to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school.

- 1.2 There is no statutory entitlement to travel assistance for children – pre-statutory school age. Children of pre-school age will not be provided with travel assistance other than in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport published July 2014.
- 1.5 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's access to education, parents/carers remain responsible for their child's safety before and after these arrangements take place.
- 1.6 While parents/carers have the right to express a preference for which school they wish their child to attend, a child who attends a school which is further away than their nearest suitable qualifying school with places available, will not be eligible for travel assistance, except in exceptional circumstances, even if the distance from home to the school they attend is more than the qualifying walking distance.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 Any travelling arrangements or expenses will be the responsibility of parents/carers if there is a nearer suitable qualifying school. 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.

2. Legislation and responsibilities relating to home to college travel

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 In addition, local authorities also have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances.
- 2.3 This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education Guidance on Post-16 transport to education and training published February 2014.
- 2.4 The family must be able to demonstrate the following:
 - Family must reside with the Borough of Rochdale for the duration of their course
 - College/sixth form 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

3 Additional Information

- 3.1 **Change of School or College Day:** If there is a change to the school/college 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/college concerned.

If there is a change to time of the school/college start or finish times for special events or school/college holidays transport will not be provided.

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

- 3.2 **Exceptional Circumstances:** Each case will be submitted and considered on its own merits by the Travel Assistance Assessment Panel.
- 3.3 **Home Address:** the address where the child/young person resides. Where a child/young person 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/college nights (Sunday to Thursday) are spent and treat that as the home address. Home to School/College transport is not provided to alternative addresses. A route with agreed pick up and drop –off points will be set for the academic year and only in exceptional circumstances will the route be changed. Any change in transport arrangements remains the decision of the Council.
- 3.4 **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.
- 3.5 **Mileage rate:** A mileage rate equivalent to the Council staff rate pence 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/college attendance records.

3.6 **Relevant Educational Establishment:** Section 508 B10 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.

3.7 **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.

3.8 **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 MapPoint or Google Maps system which utilise pathway mapping.

3.9 **Transport for Greater Manchester**

Travel support can be obtained from Concessionary Fares operated by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). 2 Piccadilly Place, Manchester. M1 3BG Telephone 0161 244 1000 general enquiries (7am to 8pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm Saturday and Sunday)

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 the website: <http://www.ringandride.info/> or by telephone: registering and general enquiries 0845 688 4933 or 0161200 6011 and 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. Any queries about the scheme can be answered by contacting TfGM on 0161 244 1050.

Additional Journeys

4.1 **Introduction.** 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.

4.2 **School Trips.** Home to school transport 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.

- 4.3 **Work Experience.** Transport will not be provided to enable students to undertake work experience.
- 4.4 **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 Education, Health and Care Plan and there is no other school closer to the child's home that can meet the child's needs.
- 4.5 **Breakfast Clubs/After School Clubs.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable children to attend breakfast clubs/ after school clubs that do not fulfil part of the school curriculum.
- 4.6 **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.
- 4.7 **Medical/Dental Appointments.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments. This is a parental responsibility.
- 4.8 **Detentions.** Transport will not be provided to take children home after detentions. This is a parental responsibility.
- 4.9 **Short Breaks / Respite.** SEND travel assistance will not be provided to and from Short Breaks or respite activities.
- 4.10 **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 EHC Plans this will be the school named on the statement or plan).

Vehicle Transport Service Standards

- 5.1 RBC is responsible for arranging and overseeing all agreed methods of travel assistance provided to pupils who are classed as residents in the Rochdale Borough with or without an 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 Council 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
- Managing in-house transport services provided by Environmental Management
- Monitoring of transport providers
- Investigating and responding to complaints about transport services

5.2 The service standards described below act as guidance and clarity for the service users for whom travel assistance is provided. Underlying these standards is the principle that, if RBC 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.

6. 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 the Council or 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.

7 Transport Service Personnel

7.1 Passenger Assistants

- The Council may provide a Passenger Assistant for children with SEND where for health and safety reasons 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 of their EHC plan.
- 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.

POLICY DOCUMENT

- 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 headteacher and the EHC Assessment and Review 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 EHC Assessment and Review 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 suitable 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 the Council.

7.2 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/carers, young people and children with respect and avoid confrontations. It is also expected that parents/carers, young people and children will treat the drivers with respect and consideration.
- Drivers must report any poor behaviour of passengers to their supervisor to relay onto Transport Services. Also to the school/college and parent/carer 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/carers 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.

8 Health and Safety

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

POLICY DOCUMENT

- RBC will use the Application for Travel Assistance forms completed by parents/carers each year or as otherwise agreed, together with information provided by the EHC Assessment and Review 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 and the Council's contractors in accordance with agreed data protection arrangements.
- Passenger Assistants are trained in disability awareness, safeguarding, basic First Aid and will 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 recovery medication to any passenger unless specifically authorised in writing by the EHC Assessment and Review Team and are trained to do so.
- It is vital that parents/carers advise the EHC Assessment and Review 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 Application for Travel Assistance 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 RBC. 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 by RBC Transport Services 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, home to school/college transport will not operate. Decisions to cancel transport will be taken by Transport Services and/or transport providers according to information provided by schools/colleges 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.

9 Journey times

- The Council will endeavour to ensure that passengers arrive at school/college fit to learn, and recognise that the length of the journey can affect this aim.
- Journey times may be longer where passengers are travelling to schools and colleges outside of Rochdale Borough.
- 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)

10 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 the transport.
- To keep journey times down to an absolute minimum and ensure that all pupils arrive at school/college on time, all vehicles will adhere to strict waiting time limits as follows:
 - If a child/young person 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/young person is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
 - If the vehicle arrives early for a pick-up it will wait until the official set time and then a maximum of 3 minutes before moving off. If this means the child/young person is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
- If the vehicle is running late for a pick up, 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.
- If a child/young person is not available for pick up within the time limits given above, for any reason, and no prior cancellation of the transport requirement has been received by the Council, this will be considered as a 'no show' and parents/carers will be advised accordingly. If 3 'no shows' are recorded during the Academic Year transport will be withdrawn and parents/carers will be responsible for the child/young person's attendance at school/college and any transport required.

11 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.

POLICY DOCUMENT

- Parents/carers must provide emergency contact details to Transport Services.
- In the event that a parent/carer is unable to meet their child at the specified time and location, the emergency contact details will be used. If unsuccessful and as a final resort, the child will be taken to a place of safety and the parent/carer will be notified. It will then be the parents/carers responsibility to collect from that place.
- In exceptional circumstance, 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 the Rochdale borough. In these cases it is the parent/carer's responsibility to notify Transport Services and make suitable arrangements to ensure their child's safety.
- In circumstances where vehicles are delayed or late arriving the parent/carer should contact Transport Services. 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) letter of decision to withdraw transport

The EHC Assessment and Review 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 parental route of appeal. In these cases, parents/carers become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

12 Absences

- Where a child/young person cannot attend school/college on any particular day due to illness it is the parents/carers responsibility to:
 - Contact Transport Services the day before travel is required, if it is known that the child will be off school/college the next day or;
 - Contact Transport Services 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.
- When travel assistance is cancelled due to illness, with no specified timeframe, it will only be reinstated when the parent/carer notifies Transport Services.
- 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.

13 Behaviour

- RBC 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 assistance removed
 - (iii) final warning indicating that travel assistance will be removed.
 - (iv) the Council 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/college 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/college and the provision of any travel assistance required.
- Any wilful damage that incurs costs for the Council or one of its contractors 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.

14 Safeguarding Children and Young People

- All children and young people will be handed over to a responsible adult at the drop off address within Rochdale, provided by parent/carer. Drivers and Passenger Assistants are not permitted to leave children and young people with any person under the age of 16 or who is not an 'authorised' adult.
- Prior to starting transport or independent travel training, RBC 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 journeys, when it is necessary to make pre-agreed rest stops, or in emergencies.

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