



Stockton-on-Tees  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# **HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

***Information for parents and carers:***

***Eligibility and decision making for  
children and young people with special  
educational needs and/or disabilities***

**April 2017**

In 2016 Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council reviewed and updated its Home to School Transport Policy for pupils of compulsory school age. You can find a full copy of this policy at <https://www.stockton.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/schools/school-transport/> .

This leaflet provides information about home to school transport assistance for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of compulsory school age (from 5 to the day before their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday). It explains the arrangements for transport assistance in more detail and answers some frequently asked questions (FAQs).

It is important that parents and carers understand that:

- It is the responsibility of the parents/carers of a pupil to ensure that he/she attends school.
- Children and young people with SEND do not automatically get home to school transport assistance, even if they have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP).
- The general expectation is that a pupil will be accompanied by a parent/carer unless there is a good reason why they cannot do so.
- The Local Authority supports and promotes independent travel training for as many children and young people with SEND as possible.

### **Which children and young people with SEND are eligible for home to school transport?**

If the distance between your home and the most suitable school is more than 2 miles (for children under 8 years old) or more than 3 miles (for children and young people aged 8 to 16) your child is entitled to assistance with travel arrangements to mainstream schools, special schools and additionally resourced provisions (specialist provision within mainstream schools).

If your child or young person is not automatically entitled to transport assistance according to the distance, then the Local Authority will consider if transport assistance can be provided due to them having a special educational need, disability or mobility problem which means they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or health and safety issues relating to their special educational needs and/or disability.

There are also extended rights to transport assistance for children entitled to free school meals on the basis of income and children whose parents are receiving maximum working tax credit. These are set out in the policy.

Transport assistance for eligible children and young people will only be provided to the nearest suitable school. The nearest suitable school is defined as the nearest school to the child or young person's home address which has been assessed by the Local Authority as being able to meet the child/young person's special educational needs.

If a parent/carer wants their child to attend a school (including a special school), which is not the nearest suitable school, as defined above, and the child or young person is placed there at the parent/carer's request, **then home to school transport is not the responsibility of the Local Authority. This is the responsibility of the parent/carer.** This is the case even when a child or young person has an EHCP.

In such cases, Section I of the EHCP will specifically identify the nearest suitable school as deemed by the Local Authority, as well as the school the child will attend as a result of parental preference.

### **How is distance measured?**

Distance is measured from the nearest point on the road or pathway outside the child or young person's home to the designated school entrance point. The child or young person's home is their registered home address. The distance is the nearest walking route.

### **How will the Local Authority decide if a child or young person is eligible for transport assistance due to their SEND?**

The Local Authority will assess the transport assistance eligibility for each child or young person on an individual basis. This assessment relates to the individual child or young person's needs and not to family circumstances. Decisions on eligibility are made by the SEN and Engagement Team.

As part of all assessments for transport assistance the Local Authority will consider whether the child or young person could reasonably walk to school. They will also consider if the child or young person's parent/carer can reasonably be expected to accompany them.

For children and young people going through an Education Health and Care (EHC) assessment the SEN Officer coordinating the assessment will discuss eligibility for transport assistance with parents, carers and young people during the process. This will begin as early as possible in the process. They will discuss options for parents/carers accompanying or transporting a child or young person to school. They will also consider and promote independent travel training if this is appropriate. As part of the EHC assessment information about the needs of the child or young person will be collected. As part of this process a travel assessment form will be completed. Once the EHC assessment is complete the Local Authority will decide whether or not to write an EHCP and agree a placement for the child or young person. A decision on whether transport assistance will be provided is taken at that point.

For children and young people who have an agreed place in an additionally resourced provision in a mainstream school the Local Authority will in the same way consider all the information about the child or young person's needs in order to decide whether they are eligible for transport assistance. Officers will also discuss options for parents/carers accompanying or transporting a child or young person to school. They will also consider and promote independent travel training if this is appropriate. A travel assessment form will be completed. A decision on transport assistance will be taken once placement is confirmed.

### **Will transport remain in place once it has been agreed?**

Transport assistance will be reviewed on at least an annual basis for all children and young people. For those with an EHCP this will be part of the annual review.

Transport assistance will also be reviewed as a matter of course when a child or young person transfers from primary to secondary school and/or when they move house.

The review of transport assistance will take into account any changes to distance between home and school and to the child or young person's needs. As a child or young person gets older the review will also include consideration of independent travel training.

The SEN and Engagement Team will make the decision as to whether the child or young person is still eligible for transport assistance.

### **How is transport arranged?**

Once it has been decided that a child or young person is eligible for transport assistance, a transport request form will be completed. This is sent to the Community Transport Service who will make the necessary arrangements for transport assistance. This will include undertaking a risk assessment with parents/carers.

It can take on average 7 days for transport to be arranged. The length of time will be significantly increased if:

- A child or young person requires specialist safety equipment in order to transport them safely
- A passenger assistant is required
- There is no suitable transport going to the school with an available space.

If a school placement is available before transport assistance is set up parents/carers may be asked to make their own arrangements to transport their child or young person on a temporary basis.

### **What type of transport assistance will be provided?**

The method of transport assistance is decided by the Community Transport Service based on the child or young person's needs and the risk assessment. The aim is to promote independence where possible having considered the risks. The Local Authority duty to ensure best value for money will always be taken into account in making transport assistance arrangements. When transport assistance has been agreed it may take one of the following forms:

- Independent travel training to walk to school
- A walking escort (only in exceptional cases where parents/carers are unable to do so)
- A mileage allowance – this may be offered in particular circumstances to parents who transport their child. It would not be provided if shared transport is already available.
- A contracted bus or minibus – with or without a passenger assistant
- A shared taxi – with or without a passenger assistant
- An individual taxi with a passenger assistant – this is only available in exceptional circumstances when a child or young person has high and complex SEND.

Where transport assistance is provided it is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their child or young person's safety by making appropriate arrangements for them to be accompanied to and from a bus stop or designated collection/drop off point.

Where transport assistance is provided a 'Transport Behaviour Agreement' will be issued. Children and young people are expected to adhere to this.

All practical and operational arrangements in relation to Home to School Transport are the responsibility of the Community Transport Service.

### **When is transport assistance provided?**

Transport assistance is provided at the beginning and end of the school day.

Transport assistance is not provided for the following:

- Travel between educational institutions during the school day – if this is required for the child or young person to receive education it is the responsibility of the school.

- Travel for assessment visits to schools
- Travel during the school day for dental/medical appointments
- If a child or young person is unwell and has to be collected from school during the school day.
- Travel to work experience placements
- To accommodate breakfast or after school clubs
- If a child or young person is excluded from school during a school day

**Is transport assistance provided for children and young people to attend short break provision?**

**There is no statutory duty for the Local Authority to provide transport assistance to a Local Authority short break provider as part of home to school transport assistance.** It is parents/carers' responsibility to transport their child or young person to and from short break providers.

Where possible and if no additional cost is incurred, the Community Transport Service will try to provide transport assistance to/from short break provision if this is provided in the Borough and the short break has been agreed as part of a social care assessment.

Any such arrangement is dependent on the availability of transport assistance and costs incurred and may be withdrawn at any time.

Parents/carers can contact their child or young person's social worker to discuss transport assistance for short breaks.

**Is there any support for parents/carers of children and young people with SEND who want to transport their child to school?**

In certain circumstances a mileage allowance may be paid to parents/carers who wish to transport their child. This would not be provided if shared transport to the school is already available.

**How do I get independent travel training for my child or young person?**

Some children and young people may have travel training as part of their EHCP. If this is the case then the school they attend must make appropriate arrangements for travel training. The child or young person's progress with this will be reviewed as part of the annual review.

**Is transport provide for pre school children with SEND?**

The Home to School Transport policy does not apply to nursery or pre-school children with the exception of a very small number of children who will be going through the EHC assessment and plan process. Individual assessment for transport assistance will be undertaken for these children as described above.

**Is transport provided for young people who are in post 16 education?**

The Home to School Transport Policy does not apply to young people in post 16 education. There is a separate Post 16 Transport Policy which can be found here .

A transport assessment will always be undertaken when a young person moves from compulsory schooling to post 16 education.

**What do I do if I am unhappy with the Local Authority decision about transport for my child or young person?**

If a parent/carer is unhappy about the decision about transport assistance then they need to follow the appeal process which can be found in the Home to School Transport policy.

**Where can I find more information?**

There is more information about transport assistance and eligibility on the Stockton-on-Tees Local offer which can be found at [www.stockton.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.stockton.gov.uk/localoffer) .

**Useful Contact Information**

SEN and Engagement Team

Tel 01642 527145 or 01642 528739

E-mail [sensection@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:sensection@stockton.gov.uk)

Community Transport Service

Tel 01642 527117

E-mail [SMCommunityTrans@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:SMCommunityTrans@stockton.gov.uk)

Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) (formerly Parent partnership)

Tel 01642 527158

E-mail [SENDIASS@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:SENDIASS@stockton.gov.uk)