

Home to School & College Travel and Transport Policy for Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – 2017

People Directorate



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1.0 Context

Halton Borough Council has a duty under the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) and associated regulations and guidance, to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. This applies to home to school travel arrangements, and vice versa, and do not relate to travel between educational establishments during the school day. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

The duty on local authorities is to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at schools for eligible children. Schedule 35B of the Act defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16) in an authority's area. Local authorities are also required to publish their Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy by 31st August each year, and, as recommended within Department for Education Guidance, this document integrates that strategy within this policy document.

Other legislation which requires local authorities to provide certain socially necessary bus services within the Borough remain in force, and some of these services provide important links to schools and other education/learning facilities within the Borough.

This Policy will be reviewed annually and published in the Education and Families section of the Council website at www.halton.gov.uk and is available to pick up at any Halton Direct Link or by phoning 0303 333 4300.

It is also intended that this document will assist in meeting the Council's priorities and support the Halton Children and Young People's Plan.

2.0 Strategy for the Promotion of Sustainable Modes of School Travel within Halton

Halton Borough Council strongly supports measures which encourage local communities to use environmentally sustainable forms of travel (walking, cycling and public transport). These wider policies are detailed within the Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP3) found at www.halton.gov.uk/ltp3. The Halton Local Transport

Plan contains a wide range of measures to improve access to personal development, education, training and work based learning opportunities for:

- Statutory school age children (up to 16 years of age)
- Young people aged 16 and over accessing continuing education, training and work based learning opportunities

Each school/college has developed a School Travel Plan with the aim of improving access by sustainable and safe forms of travel for all children and young people, promoting healthier lifestyles and less car dependency. Halton Borough Council is seeking to place health at the heart of all its policies, and the Sustainable School Travel Policy encourages children and young people to walk and cycle to school/college, and supports the Government's Children's Health Agenda.

When assessing the needs of eligible children and young people for assisted home to school/college travel Halton Borough Council has adopted a range of sustainable travel options including walking and cycling. In addition, Halton has an excellent network of high frequency bus services linking the main residential areas with local schools and the main post 16 education establishments. The majority of local buses are now fully accessible to all in the community.

This policy document is aligned to the Council's School Admissions Policy and with the principles set out in the central government document "Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance" (2014).

3.0 Travel Support to Access Education at School/College

This policy outlines the travel support available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to access education.

This policy is set out in three parts as follows:

Part A – Travel support to access education for children and young people of age 16 and under.

Part B – Travel support to access education/training for young people Post 16

Part C – Application, Review, and Appeals processes

This policy aims to support all children and young people including those with

significant Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) to access education based upon the needs of the child or young person and their family. The aim of this policy is, wherever possible, to work with the family and young person to develop a travel solution enabling the child or young person to access education in the same way that members of their peer group, who do not have a special educational need or disability, would access their education. This includes travelling independently for young people, and family based travel solutions for younger children. The desired outcome of this approach is to actively encourage children and young people's independence, which can result in them developing a skill for life and will help to develop their confidence and social skills as well as increase their future options for continuing education/training and employment.

The majority of children and young people in Halton with special educational needs or a disability including those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or an Education Health and Care plan (EHC plan) do not receive or require specialised travel support from the Council in order to access education. Wherever possible, it is expected that parent/carers of children and young people with SEN or a disability make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as parents/carers of children and young people who do not have SEND. This approach, including independent travel where appropriate, is an important factor in developing the children and young people's independence, social and life skills, and providing a travel support framework to enable as many parents/carers to do this as possible is a key part of this policy.

Specifically, this policy relates to children and young people with significant SEND, which will usually mean those with a Statement, or EHC plan but may, in exceptional circumstances, apply to those who are undergoing assessment for an EHC plan, where they fall within the definition of eligible child/young person.

This policy explains the entitlement to travel support to access education for children and young people that have significant SEND. The Council's general policy on travel to and from mainstream schools and other education establishments is available separately.

For the purpose of simplicity in the language used in this policy, EHC plan will be deemed to include those children and young people who currently have a statement

of SEN that has not yet transferred to an EHC plan.

This policy applies to children and young people who are resident within the Borough of Halton and children and young people in the care of Halton Borough Council.

3.1 Principles

Halton's policy on Transport for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is based on providing parents/carers with a travel solution which will be founded on the following principles:

- It is committed to ensuring children and young people can fulfil their potential. The aim of this policy is that all children and young people with significant special educational needs or disability should lead lives that are as independent and as free from restriction as possible;
- Promoting inclusive opportunities to enable children and young people to travel to and from school or college independently or using family based approaches similar to those used by other children and young people wherever possible, taking account of their age and needs;
- Promoting sustainable, safe, healthy and appropriate travel solutions by working in partnership with parents/carers to support them with their legal responsibility to make sure their children attend school;
- A commitment to equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity and an opposition to all forms of discrimination;
- Efficient use of public resources, delivering better outcomes and providing better value for money.

4.0 PART A

Travel Support to Access Education for Children and Young People from Statutory School Age to Age 16

This part of the policy is for children and young people of compulsory school age to the age of 16 with SEND. This policy supports children and young people with Statements of SEN or Education Health and Care Plans (EHC plans) to access

school at the start of the school day and to return home at the end of the school day, each week day during school terms, where they fall within the definition of eligible child/young person.

4.1 Legislation and Responsibilities: Parent/Carers Responsibilities

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their compulsory school aged children are registered at a school and attend regularly, or to make suitable arrangements for home education. However, in certain circumstances a Council has a duty to provide travel support to access education to facilitate this attendance.

Parents/carers are responsible for their child's safety whilst travelling to and from school. Where the Council has provided a travel solution to support a child to access education, parents/carers remain responsible for their child's safety before and after these arrangements take place.

4.2 Council Responsibilities

In certain circumstances the Council has a statutory duty to provide a suitable travel solution to facilitate a child and young person's attendance at school. This document sets out Halton's policy on Transport for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It describes how the Council fulfils its duties and exercises its discretionary powers as required under the Education Act 1996.

Young people with SEND who are over the age of 16 and under 25 but continuing in education/training are considered separately in Part B of this policy.

Under section 508B of the Education Act 1996, the Council has a duty to ensure that a suitable travel solution is made for an eligible child/young person. This will be carried out, where necessary, to facilitate the child and young person's attendance at a relevant qualifying school. A qualifying school is a 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. The general duty is to provide assistance with transport for all children of compulsory school age if their nearest qualifying school is beyond 2 miles if the child is below the age of 8, or beyond 3 miles if the child is aged between 8 and 16. The Act applies to all children and young people who permanently live in Halton and attend a qualifying school named in their Statement of SEN or EHC plan.

This policy reflects national legislation. Eligibility for a place at a school does not bring with it an entitlement for travel support to access education. This policy could change before a child and young person completes their time at school. School admission preferences should not be made on the assumption that the same set of eligibility criteria will apply throughout a child and young person's education.

4.3 Parental Preference for a School

Whilst parents/carers have the right to express a preference for which school they wish their child to attend, a child and young person who attends a school which is further away than the nearest suitable qualifying school with places available, will not be eligible for travel support, except in exceptional circumstances, even if the distance from home to the school they attend is more than the statutory walking distance.

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 statutory walking distance (see below).

4.4 Travel Support Requirements

Travel support to access education will be agreed for children and young people with a Statement of SEN, or EHC plan where:

- The child/young person lives further than the statutory walking distance between home and the nearest qualifying school, which is over two miles for children under eight years of age or over three miles for children aged eight years old and over and the child has a Statement of SEN or an EHC plan, or
- The child/young person attends the named school the Council has determined in the Statement of SEN/EHC plan as being the nearest available school that is able to meet the needs of the child or young person where that school is over the statutory distance as detailed above, or
- The child/young person lives within the statutory walking distance but is unable to walk relatively short distances to school owing to disability or mobility difficulties

(these may include temporary medical conditions) and family circumstances make it not reasonable to expect the parent/carer to take their child/young person to school.

The parent/carer's legal duty to ensure their child's attendance at school will also be considered. In particular, but not limited to, whether a parent/carer can accompany their child to school.

Travel support may be considered using supporting written evidence, (within the last 12 months), from a range of sources, for example, Education or health professionals, parents and other relevant professionals, that describes the young person as having:

- Long term severely restricted independent mobility, due to a physical disability
- Long term severely restricted independent mobility due to a medical condition resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue
- A sensory impairment resulting in severely restricted mobility
- Severe behavioural emotional and /or social difficulties in comparison with other young people of their age. This may be linked with cognitive ability or be as a result of a specific development disorder

This is not an exhaustive list and requests will be considered on a case by case basis. Note: "Long term" describes something that is likely to last for at least a year and in many cases for the rest of the life of the person affected.

In certain cases it may be determined that the travel solution will not cover the whole journey from home to school and an appropriate pick-up/drop off point will be identified by the Local Authority. Whether this is appropriate will be decided on a case by case basis.

4.5 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Children

There is an expectation that where parents/carers are in receipt of the higher rate of DLA, with a higher mobility element for their child and where this has been used to hire a vehicle, parents/carers are expected to use this vehicle to support their child to school. If a parent/carer uses their own car, in these circumstances, they may apply for a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) from the Council.

DLA for children may help with the extra costs of looking after a child who is under

16 and has difficulties walking or needs support additional to that needed by a child of the same age without a disability. If a parent/carer is eligible to receive the mobility higher rate for their child, help may be available from the Motability scheme to lease or buy a car. If the parent/carer does not drive, two people can be nominated to drive the car instead. It may also be possible to lease a scooter or powered wheelchair.

4.6 Travel Support for Children and Young People from Low Income Families:

The defined eligibility criteria applies to all children and young people. However, where the families of children and young people of statutory school age are entitled to free school meals, and/or are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC) – currently being replaced by Universal Tax Credit, this will be taken into consideration in the development of a suitable travel solution for the family. Where a parent/carer is in receipt of WTC (or revised equivalent under the Universal Tax Credit scheme), a copy of the awards notice, showing the maximum level will need to be provided. Families providing proof of low income will be assessed at the point of application and annually thereafter.

4.7 Exceptional Circumstances

In addition to those outlined above, there are some additional, exceptional circumstances in which travel support to access education may be given.

Specific consideration will be given to:

- A child/young person who has a temporary disability or illness
- A child/young person whose parents/carers who have their own medical needs or learning difficulties which impacts on their ability to transport the child/young person where necessary.

It is important to bear in mind the decision to provide travel support to access education is based on the child and young person's needs. When determining whether to offer travel support those factors to which consideration will not normally be given are listed below.

Consideration will not normally be given to:

- Parents' work or other commitments
- Personal circumstances when considering drop off/collection points and times
- If a parent chooses to send their child to a school that is not the nearest suitable qualifying school to the home address

- A journey from one educational establishment to another, including for off-site training
- Induction days, taster days, open days or interviews
- Work experience
- School trips (for journeys of this nature the organising school or institution will be responsible for travel arrangements)
- Dental, medical or hospital appointments, or other non-educational appointments
- Children taken ill during the day
- Children who are excluded during the day
- Examination timetables – travel will not be tailored to examination timetables; it will only be provided at the standard school start and finish times
- Out of hours clubs (breakfast club, after school activities); for journeys of this nature parents/carers will be responsible for travel arrangements
- Where the child is staying in Short Break (respite) care -requests for support to and from Short Break or Residential Care should be directed to Social Care within the Council's Children and Family Service.

In these instances, a travel solution will be the sole responsibility of the child or young person's parent/carer.

4.8 Travel Solutions

This section outlines the travel solutions which may be provided for children and young people who meet the eligibility criteria and are 16 or under. Specifically, this section of the policy relates to children and young people who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education Health and Care plan and are attending the nearest suitable qualifying school identified in their Statement of SEN/EHC plan. The parent/carer responsibilities are stated in 3.1.

If Halton Borough Council agrees to provide a travel solution to access education it will be provided in a safe and cost effective manner, taking account of the child and young person's specific needs and having regard to the best use of the Council's resources. An initial assessment of the child and young person's eligibility for travel support to access education will be made by an officer from the Council. It is very important that parents/carers participate in this assessment to ensure the full details of their child's circumstances are clear so the right level of support can be determined. Cases are considered on an individual basis and medical or other

professional evidence may be required before support is agreed.

The Council reserves the right to assess the whole family according to their circumstances, in order to offer the most cost effective travel support, using a variety of solutions. The travel solution will be child/young person centred and inclusive of their needs in order to develop independence and confidence.

Taxi or minibus travel support to access education will be provided only where there is no feasible alternative.

The Council will assist parents/carers with a travel solution at the beginning and end of each school day. For weekly and termly boarding schools, a travel solution will be identified at the beginning and end of the week/term where children and young people have SEND.

A travel solution may only be provided for the normal start and end of the school day and will not usually include early finish times where schools close early for the end of the half term / term. However, this will be determined on a case by case basis. The Council is also committed to reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing the environmental impact of vehicle journeys by promoting alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and use of integrated public transport. The Council works closely with schools to develop School Travel Plans that help to achieve this aim wherever possible. In the provision of travel support to access education, the Council will consider support options for eligible children/young people that lead to reducing the number and length of vehicle journeys.

Where a travel solution is put in place and either the child and young person fails to utilise the facility or their school attendance falls to 85% or below, travel support may be withdrawn. In some cases a recharge for the service may be passed onto the parent/carer where there has been persistent failure to notify the Transport Co-ordination Department of non-attendance. Until attendance meets the desired requirements, travel support will remain withdrawn. We understand that some children and young people with SEND can be exceptionally unwell and in these cases once the Transport Co-ordination Department is notified of this, a service will only be temporarily withdrawn and will be reinstated once the individual is well

enough to return to Education.

4.9 Types of Travel Solutions Provided

The nature and mode of travel support will be determined by the Council and will be one that is consistent with the Council's duty to secure Value for Money and the needs of the child. Parental consent will also be sought where appropriate.

- a) **Bicycle** - A one off payment may be made when a child or young person, who is eligible for support under the Council's policy, would like to use or uses a bicycle to travel to school. This solution can also include a programme of independent travel training to ensure the young person is able to safely cycle to and from school if required.
- b) **Walking Bus** -The Council is keen to reduce the number of vehicle journeys in and around the Borough, especially at peak times, and to reduce traffic movements in close proximity to schools. A child/young person may be allocated a space on a walking bus scheme. These involve several children/young people walking to and from school under the guidance and support of a Passenger Assistant.
- c) **Travel Pass** -This is a free pass for use on public transport. This may also be provided for a parent/carer or another travel buddy to support the child/young person to access education.
- d) **Personal Travel Budget (PTB)** – Support for meeting the costs associated with ensuring support to access education may be provided through a Personal Travel Budget. This includes a variety of flexible support options such as: access to funds for parent/carers to enable them to drop earlier and collect later, paying a family member mileage and use of a befriending service. Family based travel solutions could also be supported by a Personal Travel Budget.
- e) **Supported Public Transport** -It may be possible for a child or young person to travel on public transport if the child/young person has some assistance. Where parents/carers are unable to accompany their son/daughter, the Council may provide a Passenger Assistant, befriending service and/or a travel buddy.

f) Independent Travel Training – Halton Borough Council provides an Independent Travel Training service for people lacking the skills and confidence to plan and undertake a journey on public transport on their own. The service also trains and supports people with disabilities and learning difficulties to give them the essential skills they need to access public transport and gain independence. ‘Supporting Independence’ Travel Training in Halton provides help with:

Using money, buying tickets, finding your way about, planning a journey, using buses, using trains. A Travel Training Toolkit is also available which provides a step by step guide enabling Travel Trainers to develop tailor made, one-to-one programmes to support people to travel independently. For more information, a referral form or the Travel Training toolkit, contact Transport Co-ordination on: 0151 511 7444. Email: transportco-ordination@halton.gov.uk.

As part of the review process, young people in Year 8 onwards identified as being suitable, will be expected to be considered for Independent Travel Training. An assessment will be completed to ascertain a young person’s suitability. Top-up training will be available to support children and young people with transition when moving schools.

g) Provision of Vehicles - In exceptional circumstances the Council may provide a vehicle to transfer a child and young person to and from school. Vehicles and drivers are provided by a suitably qualified, registered, transport provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. All drivers will have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate. This provision could include:

Multiple pick up Vehicles – Whenever possible, children and young people will travel together in mini-buses. These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those children and young people 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 and young people travelling on a particular vehicle. A multiple pick up vehicle may include a Passenger Assistant to support passengers from point of handover to drop off destination. The Passenger Assistant is responsible for the safe handover to a responsible adult. Passenger Assistants will all have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate. Parents/carers are expected to assist in taking their child to/from the vehicle.

Children and young people will be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home, in many cases from recognised bus stops. A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to the child and young person's significant needs.

In exceptional circumstances, where there are surplus places on a multi pick-up vehicle, it may be possible for parent/carers to purchase a seat for a child/young person with SEND who has not met the eligibility criteria. The cost will not be in excess of the cost of an annual travel pass. This would be subject to availability and/or change, as needs for eligible passengers take priority. A notice period, where possible, would be given, if the surplus place is no longer available.

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles - Under very exceptional circumstances, the Council may support children and young people to access education in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person. A Passenger Assistant will not always be necessary. Where a Passenger Assistant is not deployed, a passenger must travel in the rear of the vehicle. There is an expectation parent/carers will support their child into the rear of the vehicle. Parents/carers can act as a Passenger Assistant for their child in a taxi or a private hire vehicle (only applicable for single occupancy transport) but the parent/carer is only entitled to travel whilst the child is in the vehicle.

5.0 PART B

Travel Support to Access Education/Training for Young People Post 16.

5.1 Introduction

Part B applies to young people who are resident within Halton who are above statutory school age and aged over 16 but under 25. It specifically relates to young people with SEND who are unable to travel to and from education independently at the start and end of the school and college day.

The Council has a discretionary power to provide travel support to those over compulsory school age. A travel solution for attending their designated/qualifying school/college which provides the desired courses will reflect individual needs. The desired outcome of this approach is to actively encourage young people to travel as independently as possible and to develop confidence and vital travel and social

skills to support options for continuing education, training and employment thereafter.

A contribution towards the cost of a travel solution will be sought from the parent/carer and if over 18 years, the individual themselves. Charges will not exceed the cost of a bus pass for students age 17 to 25. Low income for families/young person and the likely duration of the learning will also be taken into account when determining the level of contribution and a reduced contribution will be applied.

5.2 Legislation and Responsibilities: Parent/Carer and Young People

A young person must stay in some form of education or training until their 18th birthday if they were born on or after 1 September 1997.

Options are:

- Full-time education - e.g. at a school or college
- An apprenticeship or traineeship
- Part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

A young person can leave school on the last Friday in June as long as they will be 18 by the end of that year's summer holidays. There is an expectation parents/carers will actively promote and support their young person to access and attend education and training.

5.3 Council Responsibilities

Section 509AB(1) of the Education Act 1996 imposes a requirement that the Council should set out the extent to which the arrangements specified in the statement of SEN/EHC plan can facilitate the attendance at schools and colleges of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The 16-18 transport duty relates to young people of sixth form age with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged up to 19. The Council also has a duty under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities up to the age of 25 in education and training.

Children and Families Act 2014 -The Act replaces the Statement of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) for those over the age of 16 with Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans. Under the Act, the Council may continue to maintain

an EHC plan for young people over 19 if a young person requires additional time, in comparison to the majority of others of the same age who do not have SEN, to complete his or her education or training. Local authorities may continue to provide special educational provision until the end of the academic year in which the young person turns 25.

5.4 Eligibility Criteria

Travel Support may be provided for young people over 16 with an EHC plan or a Statement of SEN who are attending a full-time* school or college course and:

- Attend a designated/qualifying school or college outlined by the Council as the appropriate establishment that meets the needs of the young person and
- A young person attends a school or college more than 3 miles from their home address

* Full-time education for Post 16 is education undertaken in pursuit of a course, where an average of more than 12 hours per week is spent during term time.

Where the distance to be travelled is less than 3 miles, travel support will be considered, taking into account the individual circumstances and the travel needs of the young person with SEND that prevents them from accessing education or training independently.

In addition to those outlined above, there are some additional, exceptional circumstances in which travel support to access education may be given.

Specific consideration will be given to:

- A young person who has a temporary disability or illness
- A young person whose parents/carers who have their own medical needs or learning difficulties which impacts on their ability to transport the young person where necessary.

5.5 Travel Support Requirements

Travel support may be considered using supporting written evidence, (within the last 12 months), from a range of sources, for example, Education or health professionals, parents and other relevant professionals, that describes the young person as having:

- Long term severely restricted independent mobility, due to a physical disability
- Long term severely restricted independent mobility due to a medical condition resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue
- A sensory impairment resulting in severely restricted mobility
- Severe behavioural emotional and /or social difficulties in comparison with other young people of their age. This may be linked with cognitive ability or be as a result of a specific development disorder

This is not an exhaustive list and requests will be considered on a case by case basis. Note: “Long term” describes something that is likely to last for at least a year and in many cases for the rest of the life of the person affected.

In certain cases it may be considered that the travel solution will not cover the whole journey from home to school and an appropriate pick-up/drop off point will be identified by the Local Authority. Whether this is appropriate will be decided on a case by case basis.

It is important to bear in mind the decision to provide travel support to access education is based on the young person’s needs. When determining whether to offer travel support those factors to which consideration will not normally be given are listed as in Section 4.5. Please refer to Section 4 for the full list of Eligibility Criteria and exceptional circumstances.

5.6 EHC Plan Beyond the Age of 18

Where an EHC plan is in place beyond the age of 18, applications for subsidised travel support will only be considered once funding for an education or training provision has been agreed. There is an expectation that applications must be submitted on an annual basis; at the same time as the request to extend the education and or training provision.

5.7 Travel Solutions

This section outlines the travel solutions which may be provided for young people who are 16 and over who have been assessed as requiring assistance with transport. Specifically, this section of the policy relates to young people who have a Statement of SEN or an EHC plan.

If Halton Borough Council agrees to provide a travel solution to access education it will be provided in a safe and cost effective manner, taking account of young person's specific needs and having regard to the best use of the Council's resources. An initial assessment of the young person's eligibility for travel support to access education will be made by a Travel Officer from the Council. It is very important that young people and/or their parents/carers participate in this assessment to ensure the full details of the young person's circumstances are clear so the right level of support can be determined. Cases are considered on an individual basis and medical or other professional evidence may be required before support is agreed.

The Council will consider the following matters when determining appropriate travel arrangements:-

- a) Whether the young person could access education if no transport was provided:
- b) Provide reasonable opportunities for young people to choose between different establishments
- c) The distance between the home and the educational establishment/provision.
- d) The journey times to different establishments
- e) The cost of transport
- f) Alternative means of facilitating attendance
- g) Non transport solutions e.g. online courses
- h) Preferences based on religion

The Council reserves the right to assess the whole family according to their circumstances, in order to offer the most cost effective travel support, using a variety of solutions. The travel solution will be young person centred and inclusive of their needs in order to develop independence and confidence.

Taxi or minibus travel support to access education will be provided only where there is no feasible alternative.

The Council will assist young people with a travel solution at the usual times they attend the provision. The actual times will be determined on a case by case basis. For weekly and termly boarding schools, a travel solution will be identified at the

beginning and end of the week/term where young people have SEND.

A contribution to the cost of providing transport will be charged for post-16. Charges will not exceed the cost of providing a bus pass for 17-25 year olds. For low income families and those with longer durations of study, this will be reduced. Those students attending part time will also be charged a contribution on a pro-rata basis.

There is an expectation that where the young person or their parents/carers are in receipt of the higher rate of DLA, with a higher mobility element and where this has been used to hire a vehicle, the young person or their parents/carers are expected to use this vehicle to support transport to post-16 provision. If a young person or their parent/carer uses their own car, in these circumstances, they may apply for a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) from the Council.

The Council is also committed to reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing the environmental impact of vehicle journeys by promoting alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and use of integrated public transport. The Council works closely with schools to develop School Travel Plans that help to achieve this aim wherever possible. In the provision of travel support to access education, the Council will consider support options for eligible children/young people that lead to reducing the number and length of vehicle journeys.

Where a travel solution is put in place and the young person fails to utilise the facility then travel support may be withdrawn. In some cases a recharge for the service may be passed onto the young person or parent/carer where there has been persistent failure to notify the Transport Co-ordination Department of non-attendance. The travel solution may be re-instated following any representations made by the parent/young person. These representations should be made to the Transport Co-ordination Department and details will be provided upon request.

The Council understands that some young people with SEND can be exceptionally unwell and in these cases once the Transport Co-ordination Department is notified of this, a service will only be temporarily withdrawn and will be reinstated once the individual is well enough to return to Education.

5.8 Types of Travel Solutions Provided

The nature and mode of travel support will be determined by the Council and will be one that is consistent with the Council's duty to secure Value for Money and the needs of the young person. Consent will also be sought from the parent or young person where appropriate.

a) Bicycle - A one off payment may be made when a child or young person, who is eligible for support under the Council's policy, would like to use or uses a bicycle to travel to school/educational provision. This solution can also include a programme of independent travel training to ensure the young person is able to safely cycle to and from provision if required.

b) Travel Pass -This is a free pass for use on public transport. This may also be provided for a parent/carer or another travel buddy to support the child/young person to access education.

c) Personal Travel Budget (PTB) – Support for meeting the costs associated with ensuring support to access education may be provided through a Personal Travel Budget. This includes a variety of flexible support options such as: access to funds for parent/carers to enable them to drop earlier and collect later, paying a family member mileage and use of a befriending service. Family based travel solutions could also be supported by a Personal Travel Budget.

d) Supported Public Transport - It may be possible for a child or young person to travel on public transport if the child/young person has some assistance. Where parents/carers are unable to accompany their son/daughter, the Council may provide a Passenger Assistant, befriending service and/or a travel buddy.

e) Independent Travel Training – Halton Borough Council provides an Independent Travel Training service for people lacking the skills and confidence to plan and undertake a journey on public transport on their own. There is an expectation that all young people will undertake an assessment in this regard. The service also trains and supports people with disabilities and learning difficulties to give them the essential skills they need to access public transport and gain independence. 'Supporting Independence' Travel Training in Halton provides help with using money, buying tickets, finding your way about, planning a journey, using buses, using trains.

A Travel Training Toolkit is also available which provides a step by step guide enabling Travel Trainers to develop tailor made, one-to-one programmes to support people to travel independently. For more information, a referral form or the Travel Training toolkit, contact Transport Co-ordination on: 0151 511 7444. Email: transportco-ordination@halton.gov.uk

f) Provision of Vehicles - In exceptional circumstances the Council may provide a vehicle to transfer a young person to and from post 16 provision. Vehicles and drivers are provided by a suitably qualified, registered, transport provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. All drivers will have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate. This provision could include:

Multiple pick up Vehicles – Whenever possible, children and young people will travel together in mini-buses. These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those children and young people 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 and young people travelling on a particular vehicle. A multiple pick up vehicle may include a Passenger Assistant to support passengers from point of handover to drop off destination. The Passenger Assistant is responsible for the safe handover over to a responsible adult. Passenger Assistants will all have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate. . Parents/carers are expected to assist in taking their child to/from the vehicle.

Young people will be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location, within a reasonable distance from their home, in many cases from recognised bus stops. A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to the young person's significant needs.

In exceptional circumstances, where there are surplus places on a multi pick-up vehicle, it may be possible for parent/carers to purchase a seat for a young person with SEND who has not met the eligibility criteria. The cost will not be in excess of the cost of an annual travel pass. This would be subject to availability and/or change, as needs for eligible passengers take priority. A notice period, where possible, would be given, if the surplus place is no longer available.

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles - Under very exceptional circumstances, the Council may support young people to access education in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the young person. A Passenger Assistant will not always be necessary. Parents/carers can act as a Passenger Assistant for their child in a taxi or a private hire vehicle (only applicable for single occupancy transport) but the parent/carer is only entitled to travel whilst the child is in the vehicle.

5.9 Other Transport Options Available

In addition, travel support can be obtained from the Concessionary Fares Scheme operated by Halton Borough Council.

Concessionary Travel is offered to disabled people, whatever their age. Depending on individual circumstances this can be free or discounted travel on buses, and trains. More information can be obtained from Transport Co-ordination on 0151 511 7444.

6.0 PART C Application, Review and Appeals Processes.

6.1 Formal Application for Assistance

The parent/carer or young person **must** make a formal application for travel support to access education before any assistance is considered. Each application will be processed as quickly as possible in chronological date order of receipt. The Council may request the provision of written evidence from education specialists and/or medical experts. It remains the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their compulsory school aged child attends school regularly. In most cases, travel support to access education will be co-ordinated by the Council's Transport Co-ordination Department. In some cases this responsibility may lie with specific named schools and/or colleges. Therefore, parents/carers and young people should check the local arrangements at their child and young person's school or college before making an application for travel support to the Council.

6.2 Application Overview

The application process is designed to be as simple as possible whilst ensuring that full consideration is given to the specific needs of the child or young person. An

initial evaluation will then determine whether travel support to access education is likely to be approved. The parent/carer/young person will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days of receiving the application. Parents/carers/young person should allow up to 30 working days from the date the application was received to the start of any approved travel support to access education.

If the application form does not contain enough information to complete the initial evaluation it will be returned to the parent/carer/young person. Transport will not be considered until a fully completed form is received and assessed.

6.3 Application Process

The application is dealt with in 4 stages, as set out below:

Stage 1

Parent/carer/young person completes an Application Form. This application form can be obtained from:

<http://localoffer.haltonchildrenstrust.co.uk/transport-information/>

The Council's Transport Co-ordination Department 0151 511 7444

Once this form has been completed it should be returned to:

Halton Borough Council
SEN Assessment Team
Rutland House
Runcorn
WA7 2GW

Email to: SENAT@halton.gov.uk

Stage 2 – Receipt of the Application

On receipt of the application an assessment of eligibility will be undertaken. The first part of this assessment will be based on the distance eligibility criteria and the SEN Assessment Team will confirm with Transport Co-ordination the home to school distance. The SEN Assessment Team will then assess the other information on the form. This stage will include the gathering and evaluation of written evidence and parental circumstances. It will usually include consultation with the school/college concerned, caseworkers and any other relevant specialists and the parent/carer/young person. At this stage the application will either progress to Stage 3 or be declined. The parent/carer/young person will receive a letter notifying them of the decision and the letter will outline the reasons for the decision.

Stage 3 – Risk Assessment of Child/Young Person’s Travel Requirements

Once the application has been approved a Council Officer may contact the parent/carer/young person and make arrangements for a home visit. The purpose of this visit, if appropriate, would be to discuss with the parent/carer/young person the needs of the child/young person including their physical, medical, health and behavioural information. This will form part of a risk assessment which the parents/carers/young person will be asked to sign during the home visit, if appropriate. The Officer will also ask, where appropriate, the parent/carer and/or the child/young person to sign a Code of Conduct. The Transport Co-ordination Department reserves the right to withdraw the travel solution if the child/young person or parent/carer refuses to sign the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct will be issued to parents/carers/students at the time of application.

Stage 4 – Deciding on a Travel Solution

The Council’s Special Educational Needs Team will use the information supplied on the application form to determine an appropriate travel solution, following which the necessary arrangements to implement the travel solution will be made, by the Transport Co-ordination Team.

Parents/carers and a young person should allow up to 30 working days from the date the application was received to the start of any approved travel support to access education. If the application appears likely to take longer due to specific circumstances beyond the control of the Council, the parent/carer/young person will be notified by the Council and an estimate of the actual time needed to process the application will be given.

6.4 Review Process

The travel solution will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to ensure the support offered continues to meet the needs of the child/young person.

A Council Officer will contact the parent/carer/young person to arrange a home visit to review the risk assessment and child/young person’s information, if appropriate. This will include a review of the child/young person’s needs and the travel solution. At this stage alternative travel solutions may be discussed including transition to Independent Travel Training.

6.5 Changes in Circumstances

It is the parent/carers/young person's responsibility to inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances. A change in circumstances may mean a previously declined application may be accepted and the parent/carer/young person is able to reapply. In addition, a change in circumstances for an existing travel solution may mean the child/young person no longer meets the eligibility criteria and the travel solution could be withdrawn. The Council will decide when the withdrawal of a travel solution takes place and will take into account the term and year of education and the impact on the child/young person. Changes in circumstances include:

- A change in home address
- A move from one school to another
- Transition from primary to secondary school and transition from secondary school to college
- A change in medical and physical conditions
- A move into Local Authority care

6.6 Health and Safety

Whilst every effort is made to come up with a travel solution to meet the needs of a child/young person there will be circumstances when the travel solution will need to be reviewed as it is not working. Whilst acknowledging the impact of their SEND on the behaviour of some children and young people, where a child/young person's conduct compromises the safety of anyone travelling with them, the Council reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the travel solution.

There is an expectation that the parent/carer and/or the child/young person will sign a Code of Conduct. The Transport Co-ordination Department reserves the right to withdraw the offer of a travel solution if the child/young person or parent/carer refuses to sign the Code of Conduct. A travel solution will be withdrawn if for example, but not limited to:

- It is felt that the child or young person has the capacity to learn from this sanction and a 'cooling off' period would be beneficial
- The child or young person's continued presence in a vehicle (where this is the travel solution) presents an unacceptable risk to the health or safety of themselves or others

The Council reserves the right to immediately withdraw a travel solution if the severity of the incident is such that withdrawal is necessary to ensure that the duty of care for the child/young person or other children/young people and staff is maintained. Parents/carers will be expected to ensure their child's and young person's continued attendance at school when a travel solution is withdrawn.

Analysis of the risk will be made of any given incident and the following procedures will be put in place:

- On issue of the first suspension the case will be reviewed on an individual basis
- A second issue of suspension may be given, if once travel support resumes, improvements are not maintained
- At the issue of a third suspension and upon consideration of all circumstances, the existing travel solution will be reviewed and may be removed. A new solution will be offered following discussion with Council officers and the child/young person's family.

7.0 Curriculum Travel During the School Day

There is no duty on the Local Authority to provide transport for curriculum activities or for travel between different educational establishments during the course of the school day. It is the responsibility of the individual schools, institutions and education providers to organise and provide pupil's transport for curriculum activities during the school day. In all cases it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child's safe and secure travel to and from school. Parents/carers are responsible for their children until they are received on school premises and the parent/carer has left the school.

8.0 Change of Address

If a pupil changes home address their entitlement to assisted school transport will be reassessed on the basis of the eligibility criteria. When pupils leave the Borough any travel passes issued by the Council must be returned. The Council will make a charge for a replacement travel pass in the event of the pupil/young person misplacing or losing their pass.

9.0 Temporary Relocation

In exceptional circumstances, travel assistance will be offered to and from school for pupils who have been temporarily relocated which causes them to become eligible in accordance with the criteria detailed above. For example, if relocated due to being part of witness protection scheme, place of safety from domestic violence, family home uninhabitable due to natural disaster (e.g. flooding).

10.0 Shared Care Arrangements

Where there is a formal shared care arrangement in place and both parents have care of the child(ren) for part of the week, then home to school transport will only be provided from the address(es) where the child would meet the criteria of being an “eligible child”.

11.0 Safeguarding

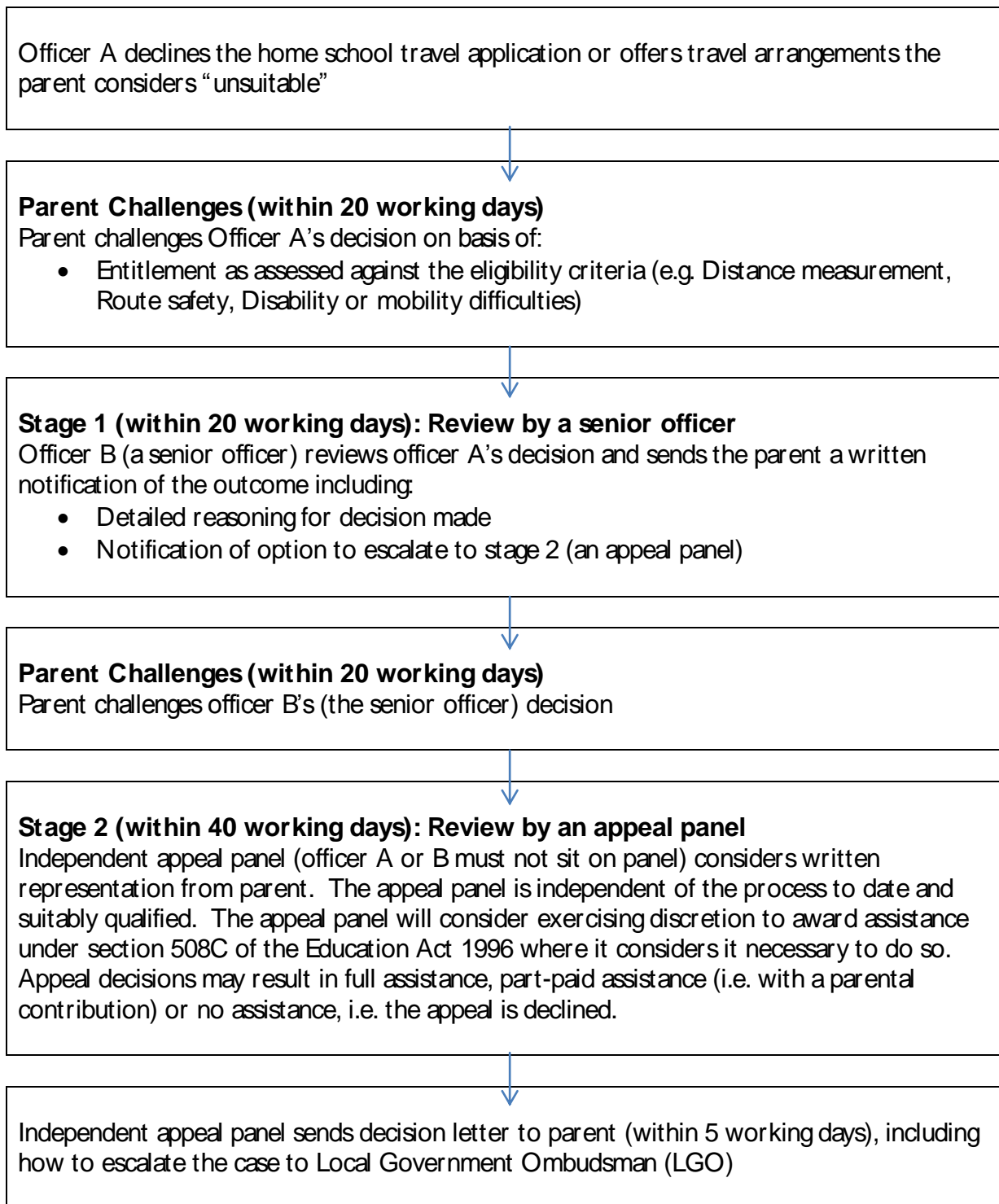
In the unlikely event that a child in receipt of assistance with transport is taken home at the agreed time and no-one is at home to receive the child, a formal agreement is in place between the Special Educational Needs Team and Children’s Centres in the event of a parent/carer not being available when the driver initially returns the child home. The child(ren) will be taken to a Children’s Centre as determined by the Council, and the parent/carer will be expected to collect their child from the relevant centre. This arrangement may incur a charge to cover the cost of staff time for remaining with the child. Obviously this matter will then be treated as a safeguarding issue and the relevant agencies advised, and may lead to a review of transport provision.

12.0 Children attending pre/after school activities

This Policy does not cover parents/carers whose children attend pre/after school activities. Parents/carers will need to make their own arrangements in this regard.

13.0 Appeals Process

Assisted Travel Appeals Process



Notes:

- Officer A refers to the assessing Officer in the Council’s Transport Co-ordination Department
- Officer B refers to the Council’s Lead Officer, Transport Co-ordination
- Independent Appeal Panel refers to the Operational Director – Education, Inclusion & Provision, and Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People.

14.0 Local Government Ombudsman

A complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman can be made by the parent/carer/young person only if there has been a failure to comply with the procedural rules or there has been maladministration of the policy.

Telephone: 0300 061 0614.

Alternatively, you can write to: The Local Government Ombudsman PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH

Fax: 024 7682 0001

You can also text 'call back' to 0762 481 1595.