

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY

FOREWORD

H&F has updated the Travel Assistance Policy to ensure it contains the correct information for residents following recent changes in the way we work.

The changes that have been made are:

- Section 8 Appeals Process. The wording has been revised to indicate the process in relation to: a) appeals against decisions on eligibility for travel assistance and b). appeals against changes to travel provision to ensure the Policy accurately reflects the revised Council processes.
- Reference to Statements of SEN. Changes have also been made to remove the reference to Statements of SEN as they have now been replaced with Education, Health and Care Plans.

Please note these are interim changes to ensure the Policy reflects current processes. There are no changes to other procedures or to the Policy itself.

Initial feedback from residents has suggested that further changes to the wording are needed so it reflects the values of the Council and is easier to access.

We intend to do this with residents using a process of coproduction so that young people with SEND and parents and carers are involved and that there is full consultation.

It was expected that the consultation, governance and approvals process for publication of the revised policy would be completed in 2020 but has been delayed due to Covid-19. We are keen to hear from parents and carers and young people interested in being involved in this.

Once approved the revised policy will be published on the Council website and SEND Local Offer and communicated to young people, parents and carers and young people and stakeholders via our local networks and events.

For further information please contact: Local.Offer@lbhf.gov.uk

TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY
v.16 Revised December 2020

1 INTRODUCTION

Legal Framework and Statutory Duty

1.1 It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their children attend school, and this includes the necessary travel arrangements to and from school. The Local Authority has a duty and has powers to make travel arrangements for children who are eligible for transport.

1.2 The Local Authority's responsibilities are set out in the Education Act 1996, as amended in section 77 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It is important to note that the 2006 Act refers to travel rather than transport. Travel assistance can consist of a range of options depending on the needs of the learner.¹

1.3 The law sets out minimum walking distances for pupils to be eligible for travel assistance from their local authority. The statutory walking distance for pupils to be eligible for assistance from the Local Authority is:

- Beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8) or
- Beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16).

1.4 For children who have special educational needs (SEN) or a disability, the usual distance criteria do not apply and, the critical question for the Local Authority to determine is whether the child,

“Cannot be reasonably expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety reasons related to their SEN”

1.5 The Local Authority will also consider:

- the needs of the child and whether he/she can reasonably be expected to walk to and from school based on his/her mobility and health and safety associated with his/her SEN or disability
- the use of public transport whenever possible and appropriate
- promoting independent travel and travel training
- promoting a healthy approach to travel assistance as far as possible by:
 - encouraging children to walk to school
 - the most cost-effective travel assistance arrangements

1.6 All children below the age of 16 are entitled to free travel on London Transport Buses by applying for an Oyster Card.²

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/77>

² <https://oyster.tfl.gov.uk/oyster/entry.do>

2 WHAT IS OUR CURRENT OFFER OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE?

- 2.1 In line with the ethos of the Children and Families Act, our overall vision for travel support is to promote independent travel training to enable learners to further develop their independence skills and to promote independent travel at other times. For more information on this offer, please see the attached Independent Travel Training Policy at Appendix A.
- 2.2 Travel Assistance will generally be coordinated by the Travel Care and Support Service. To apply for travel assistance parents must provide a completed form to the EHC Planning Service. The application form is available on the Local Offer website or can be requested by contacting the EHC Planning Service at send@lbhf.gov.uk.
- 2.3 Our overarching vision for travel assistance is to promote and deliver high quality and efficient travel care and support, which is first and foremost about caring for, and understanding the travel and mobility needs of vulnerable adults and children, rather than just about providing transport. The policy and approach will be co-designed and continually improved in partnership with service users and stakeholders.
- 2.4 The Travel Care and Support service will deliver and continually improve the following outcomes:
- Children and young people arrive at school on time ready to learn.
 - Children and adults are supported, where possible and appropriate, to be assisted to travel independently.
 - Children and adults are picked up on time, arrive at school/ day centre/ college on time, and are taken home on time.
 - Vulnerable adults arrive at the day centre/ college ready to participate in the day's activities / work.
 - Children and adults are safe, protected and their needs are met.
- 2.5 With the aim of promoting the independence and wellbeing of all young people, a range of travel options are offered. All learners should be encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle including walking a reasonable distance to school, where possible. The following travel options will be considered in light of efficient use of resources:
- Travel pass/Oyster Card for the learner
 - Travel pass/Oyster Card for the parent/carer
 - Walking bus (where appropriate)
 - Walking escort/escorted travel by public transport
 - Independent Travel Training
 - Local Authority School Bus/Coach

- In a small number of cases the use of a taxi maybe considered, for example, a learner with a severe medical condition or where there are only a small number of learners attending a provision
- 2.6 The Local Authority may consider providing funding directly to a parent/carer for costs incurred up to and including the cost of the local authority delivering travel assistance.

3 WHO CAN BE CONSIDERED FOR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE?

- 3.1 Most learners with special educational needs do not need and therefore do not receive travel assistance. However, there may be some learners with severe learning difficulties, physical and medical needs who may need home to school travel assistance to assist parents in getting them to school.
- 3.2 Most learners with Education, Health and Care Plans attend local mainstream schools and there is no need for travel assistance other than when a child has a significant medical or physical need that prevents them from walking to school or going to school on public transport.
- 3.3 Some learners with Education, Health and Care Plans attend special schools. Attendance at a special school does not automatically result in a child being entitled to travel assistance. This will depend on the needs of the child, whether it is reasonable for the Parent to accompany the child, the home to school distance to the special school and the complexity of the home to school journey.
- 3.4 The Local Authority has variable duties to provide home to school travel arrangements according to the young person's age:

0-5 years	No duty to provide travel assistance
5-16 years	Duty to make travel arrangements free of charge for eligible children in order to facilitate their attendance at school but only where no suitable free travel arrangements are provided
16-18 years	Duty to publish and give effect to a transport policy specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, and financial assistance
18+ years	Duty to make such arrangements for the provision of transport as the LA considers necessary for the purposes of facilitating the attendance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adults receiving education at an HE or FE institution

- Young adults (under 25) with SEN receiving education outside of HE or FE.

4 CRITERIA FOR TRANSPORT FOR LEARNERS WITH AN EDUCATION HEALTH AND CARE PLAN

4.1 The majority of children with special educational needs, disabilities or mobility difficulties will be able to travel on free public bus transport.

4.2 However, a transport need may arise where they:

- Are unable to walk; or
- Live within the walking distance but cannot reasonably be expected to walk safely to school accompanied by a parent/carer; or
- Cannot reasonably be expected to use public transport either at all or without assistance.

4.3 If you believe that your child cannot reasonably be expected to travel to school by public transport, you must apply for travel assistance, sending your application to the EHC Planning Team (send@lbhf.gov.uk). The EHC Planning Team will then consider the application for transport/ travel assistance against each of the following criteria:

- Are the parent/carer and child resident in the LA area
- Is the child aged between 5 and 16 and is attending or due to attend the nearest school or other place of education that the Council considers is suitable?
- Whether the Council has made suitable arrangements for the child to attend a nearer school that is nearer to his home.
- Whether the child lives within walking distance from the school.

If yes, the EHC Planning Team will consider:

- whether your child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school on their own or with someone to help them,
- why they cannot reasonably be expected to travel by public bus transport

The EHC Planning Team will consider:

- Whether your child has special needs which make it difficult for them to travel on public bus transport.
- Whether your child has a physical disability that would cause undue stress for the child if they had to travel by public bus transport.
- Whether your child has a disability or learning difficulty that would make the journey too dangerous.

- Whether you have a disability which makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for you to take your child to school where this is necessary.

If no, the EHC Planning Team will consider:

- Whether there is any reason why your child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school on their own or with someone to help them.
- Whether the journey by public transport would take too long for the child.
- What transport would be necessary for the child, taking into account:
 - Whether the child needs to travel in an adapted vehicle.
 - Whether the learner/parents are in receipt of Free School Meals or in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit
 - Whether the child requires an escort
 - Whether the parents would prefer to transport the child to and from school themselves
 - What type of travel assistance would most benefit your child and secure best value for money.

4.4 Parental consent for travel assistance to continue and review of travel assistance arrangements will be obtained annually

4.5 Parents should note that travel assistance will not be provided if you choose to send your child to a school other than the nearest suitable school unless the placement has been approved by the local authority and where there is an Education Health and Care Plan, that school is named in Section I of the Education Health and Care Plan.

Young people aged 16 and above

4.6 For details of travel assistance for young people aged 16 and above, please see Appendix B – Transport policy statement for students aged 16 or over in school or further education.

Children attending residential schools

4.7 Some specialist residential schools make their own arrangements for travel between the school and a central London meeting point. Where this is applicable, it is the parent/carer's responsibility to meet the transport at the central London pick up point. Where a learner is placed at a residential school that has not been identified by the Local Authority, parent/carers are required to make their own travel arrangements. For schools identified by the Local Authority, travel assistance will be provided as follows:

- Travel assistance will be provided at the start and end of each term (3 term year) and half term, other periods of closure and the beginning and end of one other weekend per half term;
- It is expected that parents/carers will be responsible for the cost of any additional journeys to and from school;
- Where children attend on weekly boarding basis, transport will be provided at the start and end of each week and for other periods of school closure only.

Respite care

4.8 Some learners with Special Educational Needs may attend respite care provision after the school day. Arrangements to facilitate this can be made through the normal procedures as set out in this policy.

Learners with disabilities and medical needs

4.9 Some learners with disabilities and medical needs do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan. However, special travel arrangements may be required. If this is the case special travel arrangements will be considered in relation to the criteria set out in this document and the individual needs even though the learner does not have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

5 ASSESSMENT FOR HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

5.1 When considering whether or not provision of travel assistance for any child is necessary, the local authority will take into account the following:

- a) The special educational needs and/or disabilities of the student; for example, where the child would have considerable difficulty in walking or using public transport due to his/her special educational needs or disability;
- b) The need for specialist transport, including an assessment as to whether the learner has a physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport, or suitable public transport is not conveniently available
- c) The distance and complexity of the journey from the learner's home to the school/educational establishment;
- d) Whether the learner is deemed to be vulnerable and at risk of danger if they use public or other transport;
- e) The nature of the route to school including the safety of the route and alternative routes available;
- f) The potential capability of the learner to travel independently to school/educational establishment with the provision of suitable travel training

- 5.2 Where in the case of (d) and (e) above the journey would be made safe if the learner were accompanied, the expectation is that the parent/carer will accompany or make arrangements for the learner to be supervised. In making this decision the LA will give consideration as to whether the child's parent can reasonably be expected to accompany the child. In determining this evidence is appropriate, the local authority will consider whether the action required would be in line with what would be expected of any parent of a child without special educational needs.
- 5.3 The weight to be given to each or any of the factors listed above will be a matter for the local authority in their discretion, according to the circumstances of each individual case. Please see Appendix C for examples of the issues the local authority will consider when assessing each application.

Evidence and information

5.4 All cases will be considered on their individual merits in line with this policy and in accordance with statutory guidance. The following may be considered as part of the assessment when determining eligibility.

- The Education Health and Care Plan and Annual Review reports
- Relevant Professional Reports.
- Information about the nature and reasonableness of the route (i.e. journey times, changes, safety, nature of the pavements and roads, congestion, other passengers)
- Information submitted during the application
- Where travel training has taken place or is in progress, an existing Travel Training Plan (or assessment being undertaken)
- Evidence from a Consultant/Paediatrician if parent/carer indicates that they are medically unfit to get their child to school
- Where evidence provided by the parent/carer conflicts with the advice of other professionals, further clarification or evidence will be sought

5.5 Evidence must be submitted in support of any application for travel assistance. The weight to be given to each or any of the factors listed above will be a matter for the Local Authority in their discretion, according to the circumstances of each individual case.

Decision regarding allocation of travel assistance

5.6 The decision on whether to provide travel assistance is made by the Local Authority delegated decision maker and will be confirmed in writing.

5.7 Consideration will then be given as to what assistance will be offered from the range of options available. The option will be determined by the needs of the child, the distance from home to school, public transport route, whether there is already transport going to the school and the most cost-effective mode of travel assistance.

- 5.8 Where the local authority decides to provide travel assistance, it is agreed for a limited period of time and will be reviewed at least annually or if the child's or parents' circumstances change.
- 5.9 Where a learner changes school/college or moves home or there are other changes in the child's circumstances such as successful travel training, travel assistance will be reviewed accordingly.
- 5.10 Where the decision is not to provide travel assistance or transport, it will be the responsibility of the parent to make arrangements to get the child to school until the appeal process has been completed.
- 5.11 Where travel provision has been reviewed, the Council will involve the parent/carer in the review. Where changes are being made to the type of assistance being provided, the Council will endeavour to give enough notification of changes. The decision is made by the Local Authority delegated decision maker and will be confirmed in writing. Should the parent/carer wish to challenge the decision, they submit a request for a review. Please see Appeals Process of this policy. (Section 8).

6 PARENT / CARER RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN TRAVEL ASSISTANCE IS GIVEN

- 6.1 It is the responsibility of parents and carers to ensure that their child attends school and this includes the necessary travel arrangements to and from school. The Local Authority has a duty (and also powers) to make particular arrangements for children with special educational needs and disabilities to facilitate their attendance at school.
- 6.2 It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their child is on time for collection and to receive their child after school at the designated pick up point. Where a parent/carer is persistently late either for pick up or drop off, they will be contacted by an appropriate person for the Local Authority to try and alleviate the situation. If the parent/carer continues to be late they will be referred to the EHC Casework Service Manager to decide on appropriate action. Withdrawal of special travel assistance will be considered as a last resort. If travel assistance is withdrawn:
- Parent/carers still have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school
 - It will be the responsibility of the parent/carer to arrange alternative travel arrangements for their child to and from school
- 6.3 Through working together with the local authority, parents and carers can help to support the provision of a consistently high-quality service for children and families. Together, we need to ensure:

- that mobile, home and work telephone numbers and an emergency contact number and address are held by the local authority
 - parents, carers and/or schools notify the Travel Care and Support Service of any changes to normal arrangements. For changes to address, it is not enough to inform the escort and driver – this must be notified to the EHC planning Team or SEN team for the borough where the child is resident
 - that children are ready to be picked up prior to the arrival of their transport; in order that all children can get to school on time³
 - that parents and school staff bring the child to the vehicle and, where necessary, help with placing the child on the vehicle
 - It is important that children arrive at home in good time. To help the Travel Care and Support Service with achieving this, parents and carers should always be at the set-down point to meet their child at the end of the school day. Drivers and escorts must ensure the child is collected by a responsible adult.
 - Parents and carers can support the smooth running of the service by:
 - telephoning the transport provider as soon as possible if their child is sick or unable to attend school for any reason
 - advising the escort if there may be a difficulty with their child on a specific day
 - encouraging and supporting their children to behave in an acceptable manner on the vehicle so as not to detract from the comfort and safety of other passengers or distract the driver
 - treating SEN transport staff with courtesy
- 6.4 The local authority takes its responsibility for the safety of all children and young people very seriously and, if a parent or carer is not at home to meet their child; the child will not be left alone. Transport will wait five minutes after the scheduled set-down time and then continue the journey, returning at the end of the route to attempt to drop off the learner. If a parent or carer has still not returned home the child will be taken to a safe place (for example, a Family Services centre) and a note left for the parent.
- 6.5 Parents will be responsible for the cost of any extra travel involved and supervision provided by Family Services. If such incidents occur frequently the LA may suspend provision of transport and parents will be responsible for travel arrangements to ensure that their child attends school.
- 6.6 Parents and schools are expected to work in partnership to take whatever steps are necessary to promote appropriate behaviour on home to school travel and to take necessary action when incidents of unacceptable behaviour are reported. Parents will be responsible for the cost of any

³ If a child is running late, transport can wait no more than five minutes after arrival

damage to the vehicle or property of other passengers caused by their child. Incidents of serious or persistent indiscipline will lead to the LA suspending transport. Parents will then be responsible for travel arrangements to ensure that their child attends school.

- 6.7 However, it is appreciated that some children with special educational needs will display behaviour which is related to their special educational need, such as autism, in this situation we will work with the school and the parent to improve behaviour so that the child can travel to and from school safely.

7 POLICIES FOR OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Pick-up points for bus journeys

- 7.1 To help to ensure that transport keeps to specified time schedules, children and young people will be picked up from a designated 'pick-up point'. This pick-up point may be the front door of the child or young person's house or may be a central gathering point (for example, a bus stop). Pick-up points may change in the future.

Time children and young people can expect to spend on bus journeys

- 7.2 The local authority recognises that the length of travel care journeys has an impact on our aim to ensure that children arrive at school fit to learn, whilst taking into account the factors that are outside of the authority's control, for example unforeseen traffic congestion or poor weather conditions. Journeys will be completed in the shortest time possible and our target is to complete all journeys within one hour. Considering the specific challenges that can be faced regarding transport in London the total journey time may, on occasion, be up to 75 minutes.
- 7.3 Journey times may be longer where learners travel to school or college destinations outside of the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.
- 7.4 In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the authority to vary planned routes and this may affect collection/drop off times. Examples of such circumstances include learner absences on transport and after school activities. When this is the case the authority will endeavour to contact parents/carers in advance to advise them.

Administering medication

- 7.5 Passenger Assistants (PA's) are trained in basic First Aid and receive additional training specific to the individual needs of the children that are using the travel care service. In an emergency situation PA's/Drivers will contact the 999 emergency services and follow this up with immediate contact to the TCT for notification of circumstances to parents/carers.

7.6 Transport staff members are not permitted to administer medication to any passenger unless approved by the local authority following completion of any required training and as part of an individual's travel plan.

7.7 In instances where the administration of medication by a PA cannot be approved, an appropriate process will be adopted within an individual travel plan that ensures emergency services are contacted as outlined above in an emergency situation.

Food and drink

7.8 In order to ensure that the cleanliness of transport is maintained at a high standard for all children and young people who use the service, food and drink is not allowed to be taken or consumed in vehicles used for home to school travel assistance.

7.9 In periods of hot weather, provision will be made to ensure that water will be made available for young people and will be provided as per information outlined in a child/young person's Individual Travel Plan.

8 APPEALS PROCESS

8.1 If parents/carers disagree with the local authority's assessment of the travel assistance that it deems is necessary for their child, including a decision that the child does not qualify for any travel assistance, they may request an appeal of the decision. This must be made in writing, explaining why they feel that the policy has not been applied correctly. This should be sent to send@lbhf.gov.uk or their allocated EHC Coordinator.

8.2 When writing to request an appeal, it is important that parents/carers explain where they think the policy has not been applied correctly. Parents can also supply new evidence in support of their appeal. For example:

- Information about any family circumstances,
- details of how the child currently travels to school and any concerns arising from that,
- whether a responsible adult is able to accompany the child to and from school

8.3 Appeals in relation to eligibility for travel assistance are considered by the EHC Panel. The Panel will be chaired by a different local authority officer from the one who made the original decision. The EHC Panel has advisory role and may include representatives from Education, Health, Social Care and Schools.

8.4 All evidence supplied will be taken into account by the EHC Panel.

- 8.5 The Panel will be informed by this Home to School Travel Assistance Policy to review whether the policy has been applied correctly and whether there are any grounds for amending the decision.
- 8.6 Travel assistance arrangements are reviewed regularly by the travel care team and reviews can be requested by parents/carers or schools or other stakeholders. The travel care team will discuss proposed changes with families and look to work through any concerns families have in the first instance. If agreement cannot be found, parents/ carers may appeal about the type of travel assistance provided to the Head of Travel Care Service. If the parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the arrangements, the appeal would be escalated to the Head of EHC Planning team.
- 8.7 Provided that all necessary information is received, it is anticipated that parents/carers will be notified of the appeal decision within 21 working days of receipt of the request for an appeal. However, where necessary parents/carers may be contacted for further information or for verification of information supplied. Where further information or clarification is required, this may delay the completion of the appeal within the prescribed timescale.
- 8.8 Responsibility for ensuring the continuous attendance of a child remains with the parents/carers whilst they await the outcome of the appeal process. The original decision will stand pending completion of the appeal.
- 8.9 The decision following the appeal will be final. If parents/carers remain dissatisfied with the decision they are advised to contact the Local Government Ombudsman:

Phone: 0300 061 0614

Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Write to: The Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH

- 8.10 Alternatively, they can follow the local authority's complaints procedure for concerns with the administration of the appeals process.

APPENDIX A

INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING POLICY AND STRATEGY DOCUMENT

1 INTRODUCTION⁴

What is independent travel training?

- 1.1 Independent travel training is just one part of the continuum of travel assistance support that the local authority offers. The full range of support is outlined in the borough's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy.
- 1.2 Travel training provides tailored and practical help in travelling by public transport, on foot or by bicycle. Travel training aims to help people travel independently and without fear, to work, to education, to other key services, or simply for leisure.
- 1.3 The term travel training is used to refer to any kind of scheme or programme or activity of this nature and can take many different forms. There is usually a practical hands-on element involving accompanied journeys, as well as some classroom-based tuition.

Why is independent travel training on offer or provided?

- 1.4 Travel training has been proven to be beneficial in enabling greater access to transport, education and employment opportunities for a range of people.
- 1.5 By improving access to jobs, education, services and recreational facilities, travel training supports the objectives of promoting equality of opportunity and independence.
- 1.6 Travel training also enables people to travel in a more sustainable way (i.e. by public transport, on foot or by bicycle).

What are the benefits of independent travel training?

- 1.7 The benefits to **those participating in the training** include:
- Increased independence and confidence, and improved self-esteem;
 - Increased opportunity to participate in social and leisure activities, and generally broadened horizons;
 - Improvement to general health and well-being, improved quality of life;
 - Enhanced educational performance;
 - Increased opportunity to access healthcare services; and

⁴ The information from this section is adapted from the Department for Transport's Good Practice Guide for Travel Training (2011)

- Increased opportunity and likelihood of entering employment or education.
- 1.8 All parents want their son/daughter to be happy and safe. Often parents/carers of children with special educational needs and/or adults with learning difficulties and disabilities lack confidence that children / young people have the skills and knowledge to travel and/or manage situations that might arise while travelling. When young people are trained to travel independently, they gain more control over the choices they make, and parents/carers have more confidence in their son/daughter's increased independence. An additional benefit to **parents and carers** can be a reduction in care responsibilities, enabling greater participation in employment, education and leisure activities.
- 1.9 The benefits to **schools and colleges** include learning opportunities associated with increased independence which would not otherwise present themselves, such as learning about attendance and punctuality, and attending excursions or work experience placements.
- 1.10 The benefits to the **local authority** include:
- A more efficient use of local authority resources, increasing the amount of funding that is available to invest in high quality education, health and care services;
 - Increased independence of residents, enabling education, health and social care support services to be more efficiently targeted to those who will derive the most benefit;
 - Promotion of cross-departmental working, due to the wide-ranging benefits, particularly between Children's Services and Adult Social Care.
 - Young people who develop skills for independent living, including travelling independently using public transport have greater choices and are more likely to succeed in gaining employment.

1.11 Benefits to the **wider community** include:

- Economic benefits of more people in employment or education;
- More people available for employers who are willing and able to travel to work, and improved staff retention;
- Economic benefits of recipients spending more due to increased accessibility;
- Promotion of and increased use of sustainable travel modes, resulting in environmental and health benefits for all;
- Greater diversity of people accessing the community, which should serve to reduce prejudice; and
- Increased public transport patronage, benefitting local transport operators.

1.12 The benefits of travel training are long term as the training often results in lifelong changes in life chances and the well-being of learners. This is one of the

reasons why travel training is most effective when received before adulthood, in order to maximise the long-term benefits.

2 OUR VISION FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

2.1 The Local Authority's duties regarding children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are defined in the Children and Families Act 2014 and are outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (January 2015).

2.2 'Promoting independence' is a key theme throughout the Code: *"Importantly, the aspirations for children and young people will be raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence."*

"From Year 9 onwards, particularly for those with Education, Health and Care plans, local authorities, schools, colleges and other agencies will be involved in the planning for their transition to adult life, the future and how to prepare for it, including their health, where they will live, their relationships, control of their finances, how they will participate in the community and achieve greater independence."

(SEND Code of Practice, Jan 2015)

2.3 The Council is committed to the principles of inclusion and to promoting greater independence for children and young people with special educational needs and vulnerable adults, with the aim of young people having opportunities to make choices, have control of their lives and, in particular gain employment.

2.4 It is recognised that travelling to school or work, as independently as possible, is a valuable experience and is crucial in relation to developing new life skills and taking advantage of opportunities in the community.

2.5 Passenger transport services and the needs / requirements of the vulnerable people in receipt of such services are, as with many local authority delivered services, in a flux of constant change. Furthermore, the drive for greater efficiency and the move to more tailored and personalised services, including personal budgets, have created an opportunity to move away from the traditional passenger transport models used by many local authorities.

2.6 It is our view that, in the place of the traditional service offer, there is an opportunity to migrate towards a more dynamic and customer centric offer which supports national and local priorities of individually designed accessible services.

3 ELIGIBILITY FOR INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

3.1 Independent Travel Training is part of the continuum of support that is provided for Home to School Travel Assistance. Therefore, eligibility for independent travel training is in-line with the eligibility criteria for Home to School Travel Assistance – i.e. a child or young person will only be eligible to be considered

for Independent Travel Training if they have previously been assessed to be eligible for Home to School Travel Assistance.

3.2 Research shows that the following groups are generally those that are most likely to benefit from independent travel training:

- Children / students with moderate learning disabilities attending SEN schools / centres and colleges.
- Children / students with EHCPs attending mainstream schools / colleges.
- Those children / young people in receipt of transport who are approaching key transition points i.e. Year 7 and Post 16.
- Any other children / young people in receipt of travel assistance and who have the potential and/or capability to undertake ITT.

3.3 However, there will also be young people with significant mobility issues and/or learning difficulties for whom Independent Travel Training is not a viable option.

3.4 Therefore, while Independent Travel Training is effectively available for all young people who are entitled to home to school travel assistance, only a percentage of this cohort could benefit from the training and ultimately travel independently.

4 DELIVERING THE SERVICE

Working with parents and schools and young people from an early age

4.1 The SEND Code of Practice states that local authorities, education providers and their partners should work together to help children and young people to realise their ambitions in relation to:

- higher education and/or employment
- independent living
- participating in society
- being as healthy as possible in adult life

4.2 Therefore, we will discuss the importance and benefits of independence with parents of children from an early age, while school staff will play a critical role in providing information and advice regarding the children and young people who they feel could benefit from independent travel training.

4.3 Furthermore, as children grow older and from Year 9 in school at the latest, preparing for adult life is an explicit element of conversations with children and their families. This will be undertaken via the EHC Plan Annual Review Process and, where appropriate will include discussions around the potential for independent travel and the arrangements for training to be provided.

4.4 Independent travel training will also be a priority for young people who are eligible for continued support in education beyond the age of 19, as this will be

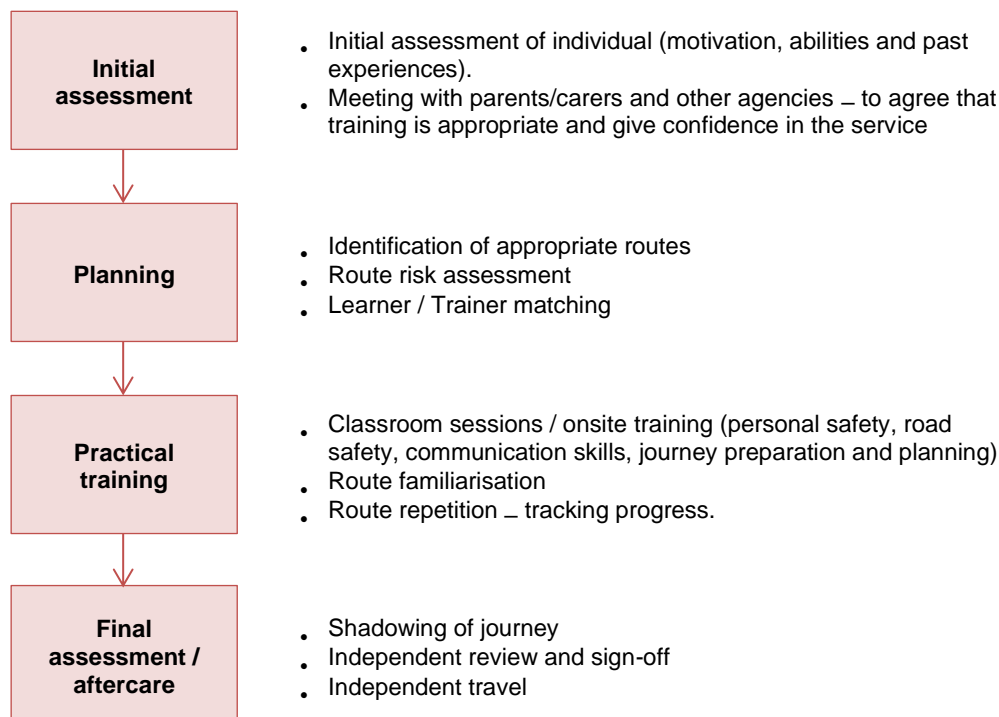
a key enabler in preparing for adulthood, increasing employability and independent living skills.

Appeals

4.5 Appeals regarding the provision of Independent Travel Training will follow the same process as outlined in the borough's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy.

Delivering travel training

4.6 Following the drafting of an EHC Plan, the outcomes of an Annual Review or general discussions with a parent that suggest a child / young person could benefit from independent travel training, the structure below is generally followed:



4.7 In addition to this, an Individual Travel Plan will be developed for each young person. This plan will set out details of the regular route that a child or young person will be undertaking independently and will also detail alternative routes

that can be taken in the event of unforeseen circumstances (for instance a specific line of the London Underground being closed). Work will be undertaken with the child / young person to ensure that they are comfortable with the content of their Individual Travel Plan and are able to put it into action when required.

- 4.8 While most participants will complete the course and continue to travel independently, some children and young people may take longer to move into independent travel, gradually building upon the skills that they have received while on the training.

Engaging with the market to develop an effective offer

- 4.9 The local authority will work with providers to explore the variety of ways that independent travel training can be delivered to ensure that we develop an overall offer of innovative solutions that are tailored to the constantly changing needs of our local population.

- 4.10 The Department for Transport have outlined the following approaches that can be explored:

One-to-one training

Given the diversity in the needs and abilities of the children and young people who take part in independent travel training, the training is most often carried out using a one-to-one approach, allowing it to be tailored to each learner's specific abilities. In most instances, the training will initially commence with generic skills such as general road safety and accessing public transport, before embarking on direct journey-specific training. The training often moves on to repetition of the route, until it is felt the learner is able to travel a route independently. Upon reaching this point, it might be arranged for the learner to take the trip alone and be shadowed by the trainer.

It is critical that the transition from accompanied travel to shadowed trips and ultimately from shadowed trips to independent travel is agreed at the correct stage in the training, as individuals will need to be able to cope with unexpected situations.

Group Training

In some instances, group training can also be used in addition to one-to-one approaches, covering topics such as road safety, personal safety and practical sessions.

'Travel Buddy Schemes'

This approach utilises 'buddying' as a technique of training for independence, whereby learners are matched with past learners who

have completed the training, to buddy them on the journey for which training has been identified.

Advantages of this approach are that it allows for a greater empathy with the learner in terms of understanding the issues and barriers faced and provides past learners with the opportunity to increase their confidence and self-esteem, while also opening the potential to gain qualifications and employment.

5 PRINCIPLES FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE SERVICE

5.1 Our aim is for those young people who can travel independently to be able to do so confidently and safely. For this reason, the following principles will apply to the delivery of an independent travel training offer:

- Person centred – the needs of vulnerable children, young people and adults are clearly assessed in relation to independent travel training and are well known and understood by commissioners and providers.
- Communication – There is excellent communication on any issues to do with independent travel training from commissioners and providers to service users.
- Satisfaction – service users and their parents /carers express a high level of satisfaction. There is confidence in the service, and that systems and processes are resilient, secure and of high quality.
- Flexibility – the service is flexible to meet the changing needs of service users, parents, carers and other key stakeholders.
- Assurance – the service is of high quality and there is a proactive approach to checking that all required processes to meet standards are in place.
- Training - all staff are competent, skilled and well trained to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge and skills required, and, have detailed knowledge and understanding of how to meet the care needs of the individuals they support.

5.2 Furthermore parents and young people have emphasised that there can be risks attached to travelling independently and that there is a dependence on organisations that are outside of local authority control, such as Transport for London. The local authority will therefore undertake the following to help to ensure the on-going safety of young people who travel independently:

- Ensure that the independent travel training policy is considered as part of local groups that consider and influence policy regarding safety on roads within the borough.
- Have a responsible and active role in liaising with Transport for London and other relevant London-wide organisations to raise the profile of the needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

- Review the needs of the child / young person on an annual basis (in line with the annual review process for an Education, Health and Care Plan) to understand whether any needs have changed and whether any top-up training is required.

APPENDIX B

2019/20 TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT FOR STUDENTS AGED 16 OR OVER IN SCHOOL OR FURTHER EDUCATION

1.1 This document operates in parallel, and on similar principles, to the local authority's Home to School Transport Assistance Policy, which covers support for students aged up to 16.

1.2 SEN travel assistance is discretionary at Post-16 and subject to assessment. The local authority will provide assistance with travel to post-16 education or training courses (including apprenticeships and traineeships), when it considers it necessary to facilitate a learner's participation in education. Providers that fall under this guidance are as follows:

- a state-funded mainstream school, or special school with post 16 facilities
- a further education institution
- an authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education
- an establishment funded directly by the Education Funding Agency, for example independent specialist providers for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- a learning provider that is funded by the local authority to deliver accredited programmes of learning which lead to a positive outcome (this could include colleges, charities and private learning providers)

1.3 Young people may require assistance with travel because they have a high level of additional needs, which may include:

- Severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties including severe learning difficulties associated with autism;
- Severe physical disability, typically those young people dependent on the use of a wheelchair; or who have a severe medical or psychological condition such that their vulnerability would mean that independent travel is likely to put themselves or others at serious risk.

1.4 Additionally, the local authority will also consider the needs of:

- those who are vulnerable to becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) at the age of 16 or 17 or who have already become NEET; these young people should be offered a suitable course of education or training and provided with any support that is necessary with transport to enable them to participate

- young parents – Care to Learn (C2L) can help pay for childcare and travel costs for learners aged 19 and under at the start of their course. Learning providers should be encouraged to support young people to apply for C2L – further details are available at www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

1.5 In assessing whether a young person needs assistance with travel between home and their education or training setting, the LA will take into account the following factors:

- whether appropriate education/training provision is available at a nearer location to the young person's home (subject to the provision of reasonable choice in allowing young people to choose between different establishments at which education and training is provided);
- whether the young person has received independent travel training prior to the application;
- the outcome of independent travel training carried out prior to the application;
- what alternative options for transport have been considered and could be made available

1.6 Assistance with travel will be available to the nearest college that provides a suitable course. Any offer will take into account the promotion of independent travel skills and cost and, when assistance is given, it will not ordinarily constitute door to door transport.

- The LA will expect a financial contribution towards any travel arrangements it makes on a young person's behalf. Annual rates will take into account mobility allowances. In determining the rates of contribution, we will:
 - ensure that any contribution is affordable for learners and their parents
 - ensure that there are arrangements in place to support those families on low income
 - consider the likely duration of learning and ensure that transport policies do not adversely impact particular groups

1.7 Travel assistance may be provided for a fixed period to facilitate transition plans, or independent travel programmes.

1.8 Individual eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed at least annually.

1.9 For more information regarding subsidised college transport for 16 to 19-year olds, please follow the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/subsidised-college-transport-16-19>

APPENDIX C

Eligibility evaluation process

This section lays out the issues the Local Authority will consider when the parent/carer requests assistance in getting the learner to school.

Having considered the age of the learner and the distance from home to school, if the request is based on the needs of the child the following issues will be considered: A.

Physical/medical/severe learning difficulties.

- (i) If the learner has a medical condition or disability which would result in the walk to school causing the learner undue fatigue, distress, discomfort or pain
- (ii) If the learner can access public transport without undue fatigue, distress, discomfort or pain (This would include walking to the bus stop/ station and mounting/dismounting the vehicle).
- (iii) Reasons why the parent/carer cannot take the learner to school

B. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)

- (i) If the learner has SEMH of such a severity that a specialist school placement is required
- (ii) If the learner can walk to school or travel by public transport without causing difficulties to him/herself and or to other people
- (iii) If the learner travel safely without supervision to school
- (iv) Reasons why the parent/carer cannot take the learner to school

C. Sensory impairment/social and communication/general and specific learning difficulties

- (i) If the learner can walk to school and/or travel on public transport without supervision
- (ii) If the learner can walk to school and/or travel on public transport without an escort
- (iii) Reasons why a parent/carer cannot take the learner to school