

London Borough of Bexley

Travel Assistance Policy

For Post 16 Students

Academic Year 2018/2019

May 2018

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1. Introduction

1.1 The London Borough of Bexley is required to identify what travel assistance is available to support young people aged 16-18 and students aged 19-25 who access school/college or further education.

There is no automatic entitlement to free travel assistance to school or college beyond year 11. However, in support of the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) and Preparing for adulthood (PfA) The London Borough of Bexley will offer a discretionary service to young people who meet the eligibility criteria

The purpose of this document is to describe the external support that is available for students as well as the travel assistance that the London Borough Bexley can provide to enable students to access educational provision

1.2 This travel assistance policy for students aged 16 to 25 is based on the following principles:

- The Council wishes to encourage and promote independent travel wherever practicable and possible, and will provide travel training for students who would benefit from it.
- The provision of travel assistance by the Council is discretionary. Students seeking travel assistance from the Council will be expected to apply for support each year and all applications will be considered if the eligibility criteria are met.
- The availability of appropriate public transport services, the provision of travel assistance provided by educational establishments, and the provision of financial support to facilitate travel, will be taken into account before the Council will consider providing travel assistance.

1.3 This policy forms part of the London Borough of Bexley's Local Offer for children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability. Further information on the Local Offer can be found at: <http://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk>

2. Scope

2.1 Academic Year

This policy covers the period 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019.

2.2 Student Residency

This policy applies to anyone who is resident in the London Borough of Bexley. Students not resident in Bexley, or who are looked after by another Council but live in Bexley, should refer to the travel assistance/transport policy issued by their home local authority.

2.3 Student Age

This policy applies to students aged over 16 but under 19 as from 31 August 2018, (or in some cases 25 if they have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)) and those continuing students who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday.

2.4 Learning Venue

This policy provides for students who are engaged in education or training at:

- a school (including academies)
- a further education institution
- a sixth form college
- a local authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education;

- an establishment funded directly by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) e.g. independent specialist providers for students 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)

Additionally, the policy applies to students undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships.

It is expected that students will study/train at the nearest reasonable and appropriate learning venue and utilising the most cost effective mode of transport and any available fare concessions. Students should therefore carefully consider transport cost implications when selecting their venue of study.

3. Travel Assistance Offered by External Organisations

There are a number of schemes and funds to support people of all ages with additional needs to access education, while preparing students to be independent, confident travelers.

3.1 Public Transport

Since September 2006, all students up to the age of 16, or 18 if they are in full-time education, have been entitled to free transport on buses within London. Additionally, concessionary fares on public transport in London are available to students aged over 18 if they fulfil certain criteria. The Council considers that these services will meet the travel needs of most students aged 16-25.

16+ Zip Oyster Card

Residents of London boroughs aged 16-18 and in full-time education or on a work-based learning scheme (at least 12 guided hours per week on courses at level 3 and below) can apply for a 16+ Zip Oyster photocard.

This card gives:

- Free travel on London buses and trams
- Child rate for 7 day, monthly or longer period travelcards, bus and tram passes
- Half the adult rate when you pay as you go on bus, tube, tram, DLR and London overground
- Half the adult rate on some pay as you go tariffs on National Rail
- Free travel is available until the end of the course or the academic year, whichever is earlier.

Further details on the scheme can be obtained by visiting:

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/zip-oyster-photocards?intcmp=25258>

18+ Student Oyster Card

18+ Student Oyster photocards are available to students who are aged 18 and over and attending a full-time course (and in certain circumstances a part-time course) at universities, colleges and schools registered on the TfL 18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme. The 18+ student card gives 30% discount on bus, tram, tube, DLR, London overground and national rail travelcard season tickets.

Further details on the scheme can be obtained by visiting:

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/adult-discounts-and-concessions/18-student>

Apprentice Oyster Photocard

With an apprentice Oyster Photocard students aged 18 or above can get 30% discount on the adult rate travelcard and Bus & Tram Pass season tickets.

Further details on the scheme can be obtained by visiting: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/adult-discounts-and-concessions/apprentice-oyster-photocard>

The Young Persons Rail Card

Available to students aged 16-25 or over 26 and in full-time education.

Further details of the scheme can be obtained by visiting:

<http://www.16-25railcard.co.uk/>

Freedom Pass Scheme

This scheme is operated by Inspire Community trust on behalf on the London Borough of Bexley.

The Freedom Pass allows for free travel on London's public transport, 24 hours a day on buses, tubes, trams, DLR and off peak travel on National Rail, within the Freedom Pass boundary. Disabled pass holders can also travel for free on local bus services anywhere in England between 9.30 am and 11 pm.

Further details on the scheme can be obtained by visiting

<http://www.inspirecommunitytrust.org/services/blue-badge-freedom-pass/freedom-pass-scheme.html>

or contacting the Freedom Pass Team on 020 3045 5329

3.2 Cycling

Cycling is an efficient, sustainable form of transport. We seek to provide safe, convenient and clearly identified cycle facilities, both to make cycling easier and more fun and as part of our traffic management measures.

[Free cycle route maps are available from TfL online](#)

Most schools and colleges have secure cycle storage areas. Students should contact their school, college or training provider, college or training provider for information.

3.3 16-19 Bursary Fund

Students should consult their chosen learning venue to see what travel assistance they may be able to provide. Additionally, students who need financial assistance with travel costs should consider the schemes described below.

Additional support/assistance options are listed in Appendix A

The 16-19 Bursary Fund helps 16 to 19 year olds continue in education, where they might otherwise struggle for financial reasons. This may include transport costs to and from their learning venue. It is made up of two parts:

Bursaries of £1200 a year are payable to students who are:

- in care
- care leavers
- in receipt of income support or universal credit – or disabled and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and also Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments

A discretionary fund for school, college and training providers to distribute to support any student aged 16-19 who faces genuine financial barriers to participation, such as costs of transport, meals, books or equipment.

How to apply

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is administered by education institutions, in accordance with its own Bursary Scheme Policy. Students need to apply directly to their learning venue for support from the scheme.

Further details of the scheme can be found by visiting:
<https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

4. Travel Assistance offered By the Council for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.

4.1 The London Borough of Bexley expects and encourages most students aged 16-25 to travel independently to learning venues and/or to use public transport where appropriate. However, in some circumstances, additional assistance with travel may be required.

The Council may provide travel assistance for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria as agreed by the council.

Eligibility Criteria

A young person may be eligible if all of the following statements apply to them:

- a) The young person is under 25 years of age and they reside or are Looked After by the London Borough of Bexley
- b) They have a special educational need or disability, which may be identified in an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or other exceptional circumstances which impacts on their ability to use those public transport arrangements
- c) The young person lives more than 3 miles away from their learning venue (by the shortest safe walking route), or they live less than 3 miles away
- d) They have exhausted all available sources of support in Section 3 of this document.
A young person can apply for council travel assistance in addition to the options provided by other organisations, but any support received will be taken into account when assessing what form of travel assistance is most appropriate.
- e) Their learning venue is the nearest that can meet the majority of their needs.
- f) Their study programme is full-time – equivalent to a minimum of 18 hours per week
- g) If the young person is aged 19 or over, they have been in continuous education or training since before their 19 birthday. Unless they have an EHC plan issued

Where the Council considers that the student meets the criteria for travel assistance, and that this assistance cannot be provided more appropriately by their learning provider or through assistance provided by other means, consideration will be given to a range of options including:

4.2 Travel Pass-Supported Travel on Public Transport: Where appropriate and necessary, the Council may provide a budget to purchase a travel pass to allow an adult to support a student travelling to and from a learning venue on public transport. Alternatively, the Council may be able to provide an accompanying escort to provide similar support.

4.3 Pick-up point: This is a designated pick-up point up to half a mile from a student's home address. Students will be collected and dropped off by a vehicle at their pick-up point before and after school/college. It is the responsibility of the carer/parent to make suitable arrangements to ensure the safety of the student from the pick-up point. Parents/carer will be informed of the pick-up point and the process prior to the start of the scheme.

4.4 Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB): A sum of money paid directly to parents/carers or students to enable them to make travel arrangements. The amount that is received will be based on the distance travelled from home to their place of learning and the student's need. The PTAB is not taxed and does not affect any other benefits that are received; the only requirement is that the student attends their learning venue regularly and on time. A PTAB can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.

4.5 Independent travel training: The Council recognises that travelling to and from their place of learning as independently as possible is a valuable experience for students as they grow up. The London Borough of Bexley is committed to promoting independence for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that their life experiences can be similar to those of their peers.

The Council has introduced a programme of independent travel training for students. All eligible students will be encouraged to undertake independent travel training unless they are assessed as being unlikely to benefit from it. The travel training programme covers pedestrian training and home to school/college training.

If the Council considers that a student may be capable of travelling independently, following an assessment by the travel training provider and completion of an agreed travel training programme and the student refuse to undertake the assessment or the training, the Council may refuse to provide travel assistance.

If parent/carers or students would like to receive further information regarding the Independent Travel training programme please contact Bexley Integrated Transport Unit or Bexley Accessible Transport Scheme (details below)

4.6 Transport vehicles: Where assessed as essential, the Council may provide a vehicle to transport a student to and from school from their home address. Where transport vehicles are provided it will be by a suitably qualified and licensed commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. Whenever possible, students will travel together in buses. These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned on the basis of school start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all students travelling on a particular vehicle. Under very exceptional circumstances the Council may transport pupils in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the student. Arrangements of this kind will be kept under regular review and, where possible, the opportunity will be taken to move to an alternative suitable form of travel assistance.

5. Provision of Passenger Assistants

In some circumstances a Passenger Assistant may be provided to accompany students on transport provided by the Council. Passenger Assistants will only be provided where they are necessary for the safe operation of vehicles and/or the care of students.

6. Application and Assessment Process (All Applicants)

Applications for travel assistance must be made annually and will be given full consideration to the specific needs of the student. Where it is decided travel assistance is appropriate this will generally be implemented within 30 working days from the date of the application or, where appropriate, by the following school term. All travel assistance arrangements are regularly reviewed.

The application process is dealt with in three stages:

6.1 Stage 1: Application

For all applicants (with or without a Statement of SEN or EHC Plan), the parent/carer or student must make **a formal online application before any assistance can be considered.**

Supplementary evidence of the need for travel assistance should be provided at this stage. Application forms can be obtained from the Bexley website.

For students with a Statement of SEN or an EHC Plan, the Council will carry out an initial assessment of travel requirements based on the place of learning proposed. Where this assessment indicates that the student is not eligible for travel assistance, parents/carers or the student will be advised accordingly and will have a right to appeal (see paragraph 10)

6.2 Stage 2: Assessment

This stage will include the evaluation of written evidence and family circumstances. This may include a home visit, consultation with the place of learning/caseworkers and any other relevant specialists. It is possible at this stage that the application may be declined and parents/carers or student may appeal against such a decision if they wish.

6.3 Stage 3: Implementation

Where the Council agrees to provide travel assistance it will also decide what type of travel assistance would be suitable and appropriate to meet the student's needs. The student will be requested to sign the Council's code of conduct agreement before the travel assistance is provided. If the parent/carer or student does not accept the travel assistance offered by the Council, their application will be withdrawn and they will need to take responsibility for their attendance at school.

In some cases travel assistance will be granted for a limited period and parents/carers or student will be required to submit a new application, or to provide further information, in order to secure continued assistance.

The parent/carer or student will be informed in writing of the outcome of the application usually within 30 working days of receipt of the application or later if additional information is required.

7. Travel Assistance Reviews

It should be noted that once a student is eligible for transport assistance, this is no guarantee that they will continue to be eligible in the future. The London Borough of Bexley reserves the right to review transport requirements outside of the annual review in order to safeguard its duty to ensure the efficient use of resources. All travel assistance applications must be made annually. Where travel assistance has been granted on time limited basis further information will be sought prior to the end of the agreed assistance period to enable a timely review to take place.

The Council may also review eligibility for travel assistance by means of a scheduled meeting or via telephone contact. If parents/carers or student does not participate in these reviews it may result in travel assistance being withdrawn. Parents/carers or student will be informed of all decisions in writing, including notification of the right to appeal.

Travel assistance will also be reviewed when there is a significant change in circumstances, such as a change in home address, place of learning or a change in the students need. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer or student to notify the Council immediately of any changes that may affect the provision of travel assistance.

Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the academic year, the next half term or sooner where possible.

8. Cessation of support

The Council will review and remove travel assistance where it is proven that assistance was obtained via a fraudulent application, or where the students individual circumstances have changed

and either the student is no longer eligible for support, or the student has been assessed as not requiring such support. Assistance may also cease on the request of the parent/carer or student who may have made alternative arrangements for travel.

In the event of travel assistance being agreed in error the Council reserves the right to cease transport with immediate effect.

9. Appeals

If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the Council, or the parent/carer or student disagrees with the type of assistance being offered, they have a right of appeal. An appeal form can be requested by emailing the Appeals inbox on Transport.Appeals@bexley.gov.uk or by visiting the Bexley Local offer website at www.bexleylocaloffer.uk. An appeals form must be completed and returned within 20 days of the decision letter date.

Appeals are administered in two stages:

10.1 Stage 1: Review by Head of SEN

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

Further evidence may be requested to support the appeal and consultation with case workers or professional bodies may be required. Stage 1 appeals are decided by the Head of SEN. Parents/carers or student should receive their decision letter within 20 working days of their appeal form being received.

10.2 Stage 2: Independent Appeal Panel

If the parent/carer or student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they should notify the Council in writing within 20 working days of receiving their Stage 1 appeal decision.

The appeal will then be considered independently of the SEN Service and will involve consideration of all evidence gathered and the reasons for the decision being made. This will be undertaken by the "Independent Panel" constituted by a mix of panel members independent of the process to date and suitably experienced.

Parents/carers or students should receive their decision letter within 40 working days of their appeal being received.

This decision is the final stage of the Council's appeal procedure in relation to travel assistance. If parents/carers or student remain dissatisfied about the process, they can make a formal complaint.

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

If after the appeal, travel assistance is agreed, it will commence by the next half term or sooner if possible. No backdated payments will be made nor will the Council accept any claims by parents/carers for costs incurred (e.g. for making alternative transport arrangements) during the process of appeal.

11. Complaints

11.1 Bexley Councils Complaints Procedure

The Council's travel assistance appeal procedure in respect of eligible student will ensure that the merits of every application have been fully and properly considered, taking account of the relevant

circumstances. However, if parents/carers or student remain dissatisfied and believe that the procedure has not been followed properly, they may complain under the councils complaints procedure, full details are available on the [Council's website](#)

Complaints can be made in a number of ways:

- by email to: complaints@bexley.gov.uk
- by letter to: The Complaints Team, London Borough of Bexley, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, DA6 7AT
- telephone 020 8303 7777
- in person at the Civic Offices

11.2 Local Government Ombudsman

If parents/carers or student are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint once it has completed Bexley's Complaints Procedure, parents/carers or student can ask the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) to consider their complaint.

The Ombudsman is an independent body that exists to review complaints made to local authorities where the matter has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction. The Ombudsman provides a free service.

Parents/carers or students can approach the Ombudsman at any time during the complaints process for advice and assistance. However, the Ombudsman will not normally look into a complaint if the Council has not had an opportunity to resolve it through the complaints procedure.

For further information and contact details please visit: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/>

12. Contact and further information

12.1 Travel Assistance Commissioning Team

For further information or enquires about the application, assessment and appeals process, please contact the Travel Assistance Commissioning Team (TACT) by emailing tact@bexley.gov.uk or write to BITU: Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath DA6 7AT or calling 02030454321.

12.2 Bexley's Local Offer

For further information on Bexley's travel assistance offer as well as general information and services that support children and young people with special educational needs and disability aged 0-25 years old. Please visit www.bexleylocaloffer.uk

12.3 Bexley Integrated Transport Service (BITU)

Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the provision of the service should be made to BITU email: bitu@bexley.gov.uk or write to BITU: Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath DA6 7AT or call 020 8303 7777 and ask for BITU

12.4 Bexley Accessible Transport Scheme (BATS)

For student who are not eligible for travel assistance from the council but would like travel training, enquires can be made to BATs by calling: 0132231 1333 or visiting www.bexleyct.co.uk

13. APPENDIX

Appendix A: Definitions/Additional Information

Children with Disabilities: The Council will expect parents/carers or students who receive the Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payment) with respect to the students disabilities, to use that funding for the purpose of enabling the students travel to and from their place of learning, unless exceptional circumstances apply. In such circumstances the Council will consider the payment of a personal travel assistance budget for students who would otherwise be eligible for travel support from the Council.

Exceptional Circumstances: Each case will be submitted and considered on its own merits by the Statutory Assessment Panel.

Home Address: the address where the student resides. Travel assistance will not be provided to alternative addresses e.g. grandparents. Any change in transport remains the decision of the Council.

Low Income Families: students whose parents/carers are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit.

Relevant Educational Establishment: Section 508 B10 of the Education Act 1996 defines a relevant educational establishment as either a qualifying school or places (other than schools) where a student is receiving education by virtue of the arrangements made under section 19 (1) of the Act. Qualifying schools are community, foundation or voluntary schools; community or foundation special schools, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units, maintained nursery schools or city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts or Academies.

Statutory Walking Distance: statutory walking distance is two miles for pupils aged up to eight and three miles for those aged eight and over. The statutory walking distance is measured by the shortest route which a student may walk with reasonable safety. Walking routes are measured using MapPoint or Google Maps system which utilise pathway mapping.

Appendix B: Additional Journeys

1. **Introduction.** This Appendix explains the Council's policy for the provision of Travel Assistance for journeys additional to the normal provision at the beginning and end of the normal school working day.
2. **Trips.** Where adjustments in timings would result in additional transport costs to the Council, educational setting will need to take this into account in the planning of trips, and such costs must be reimbursed to the Council as part of the costing arrangements for the whole trip.
3. **Examinations.** Transport timings may be adjusted to enable early departure from when students are undertaking national examinations. However, to avoid unnecessary additional costs, it is expected that such journeys will be co-ordinated and the settings may be asked to retain students for reasonable periods after the examinations to enable this.
4. **Work Experience.** Travel assistance will not be provided to enable students to undertake work experience.
5. **Induction Days/ 'Taster Days'.** Travel assistance may be made available for entitled students to attend Induction Days or 'Taster Days' at the Council's Special Schools and resourced provisions. Transport may also be provided for entitled students attending

Induction/'Taster Days' at Independent Schools where such a school has been named by the Council in the students Statement and there is no other school closer to the their home that can meet the their needs.

6. **Illness.** It will be the responsibility of the parent/carer or student to arrange transport if they are taken ill at their place of learning. Travel assistance will not be provided to enable them to return home
7. **Medical/Dental Appointments.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments.
8. **Short Breaks / Respite.** Where it has been agreed, transport will be provided for student attending Short Breaks within the Borough. By agreement with the Council, transport will also be provided for Looked After Children from/to a temporary alternative home address to facilitate respite breaks for carers.
9. **College attendance while registered at school.** Transport arrangements for journeys during the school day to attend college placements are the responsibility of the school at which pupils are registered (for pupils with statements of SEN or EHC plans this will be the school named on the statement or plan).

Appendix C: Additional funding support

I. Care to Learn

Care to Learn provides financial support for young parents (aged under 20) who want to continue their education and need help with the cost of childcare and any associated travel. It pays up to £175 for each child to help with the cost of:

- childcare while the parent is learning, on work placements linked to the course or programme of study or doing private study;
- any registration fees (up to £80) or deposit (up to £250) charged by the childcare provider;
- fees the student needs to pay during summer holidays to keep the childcare place open; and/or additional travel costs the student has to pay so they can take their child from home to the childcare provider.

The childcare provider will receive payments direct from Care to Learn. Funding to help with travel costs will be paid to the student's learning or training provider regularly and the provider will reimburse the student or arrange travel for them.

The Care to Learn scheme is available for parents in England who are aged under 20 when they start a course or training programme in 2018/19.

How to apply:

Young parents need to apply for Care to Learn for each academic year.

Students can obtain more information and request a Care to Learn application pack online from www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview

2. 16-18 Residential Bursary Fund (RBF)

The Residential Bursary Fund is intended to provide financial support towards the costs of accommodation for students attending one of the designated providers delivering specialist provision, where their course requires the young person to be resident in order to participate because it is not available locally and/or because it requires students to be available at unsociable hours on a regular basis.

Institutions may determine their own eligibility criteria and process for considering applications for RBF support. Priority must be given to students who are unable to access relevant learning within daily travel from their home or where the costs of such travel are prohibitive.

How to apply:

The Residential Bursary Fund is administered by institutions. Students should apply directly to their institution for support and/or for further information please visit www.gov.uk/learner-support-helpline

3. Residential Support Scheme (RSS)

The Residential Support Scheme provides financial support with accommodation costs for students aged between 16 and 18, who need to live away from home to study because their course is not available locally.

Students must meet the eligibility criteria (which includes an income assessment) in order to receive support from the Residential Support Scheme. If they are assessed as eligible, the amount of award they receive will be based on their actual accommodation costs up to a maximum award level.

How to apply:

Students can request an application pack from their learning venue or you can visit www.gov.uk/learner-support-helpline.

4. Discretionary Learner Support (DLS)

For students aged 19 or over, on a further education course and facing financial hardship, students could receive DLS. Students need to apply directly to their academy, school, college or other training provider for support from the scheme.

How to apply:

Schools/ colleges help to determine the best form of provision in the given circumstances and further details can be obtained from each individual learning venue.

Further details on the scheme can be obtained by visiting:

<https://www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support>