

# London Borough of Bexley Travel Assistance Policy

**For Post 16 Students Academic Year 2021/2022**

Version: February 2021

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## Section 1: Policy Overview & Introduction

This policy is Bexley Council's Travel Assistance Policy Statement which the 2014 statutory guidance for Post 16 transport to education and training requires every local authority to publish each year. We are required to identify what travel assistance is available to support young people aged 16-18 and learners aged 19 to 25 who access school or further education institutions.

The Travel Assistance Policy Statement will be reviewed annually. This version covers the academic year from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2022.

The London Borough of Bexley is committed to ensuring that every child, young person and their family in Bexley lead as independent and healthy a life as possible, feeling confident, safe and secure and achieving their potential.

We want to support all children and young people to be as ambitious as possible throughout their lives including those with the most complex needs. As they prepare for adulthood, this could include:

- travelling as independently as possible - being able to go safely where they want when they want
- accessing Further (higher) Education and/or employment – this includes exploring different employment options, such as support for becoming self-employed and help from supported employment agencies
- independent living – young people having choice, control and freedom over their lives and the support they need, their accommodation and living arrangements, including supported living
- participating in society, including having friends and supportive relationships, and participating in, and contributing to, the local community
- being as healthy as possible in adult life

Bexley Council's aim is to support and encourage young people to continue with their education and training where this is appropriate and suitable to their needs. This will enable young people to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for their personal development to support preparation for adulthood, and wherever possible progression into employment or Further/(Higher) Education.

### Important Information

**The Council is not required to provide cost-free home to school or college (transport) travel assistance once a young person is over compulsory school age (16). Previous entitlement to statutory travel assistance (aged 5-16yrs) does not confer an entitlement to Post 16 travel assistance.**

**All young people continuing their education post 16 must reapply for travel assistance each academic year.**

**Bexley Council will only provide travel assistance if all other forms of travel support from other organisations/institutions/funds have been explored and exhausted as either unavailable or not suitable due to the specific needs of the young person.**

Examples of travel support options available for young people accessing an education/training setting post 16 years of age includes:

- Transport for London – Free and Discounted Travel
- DLA/PIP Mobility Element
- Vulnerable Group Bursary
- Discretionary Bursary
- Discretionary Learner Support

**Approximately 75% of all young people in Post 16 Education in Bexley who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are not in receipt of travel assistance support from the Council. They either travel independently or their families make their own arrangements to and from their place of education. This is very much in line with enabling them to live as independent a life as possible and similar to their peers.**

Travel Assistance may be provided to a young person if they satisfy the eligibility criteria, they are aged 16 to 18 entering further education, or they are continuing learners aged 19 to 25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities with a maintained Education Health and Care Plan.

If Bexley Council agrees to provide travel assistance it will be provided in a safe manner taking account of the young person's specific needs and the best use of the Council's resources/public expenditure.

Bexley Council recognises that travelling to school independently is a valuable and important experience for young people as they grow up, enabling young people to gain skills required in adult life. To do this, many young people with special needs may need extra training to help them learn the skills required for greater independence.

**Bexley Council's priority travel assistance therefore is the provision of independent travel training. Its purpose is to support the development of greater independence and improved life skills for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.**

## **General Principles**

This policy applies to all students participating in post 16 education and supersedes all previous transport arrangements and entitlements.

This policy is based on the following principles:

### **Parental, Young Person and Council responsibilities**

Parents, carers and the young person are responsible for ensuring that a young person participates in education up until their 18th birthday. To support this, Bexley Council may provide discretionary assistance with travel in certain circumstances.

If assistance is provided, it remains the responsibility of parents/carers/young person to ensure continued attendance at the place of education/study.

### **Independence and wellbeing**

A key aspiration and requirement of Bexley Council is to provide the necessary support for young people with and without Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

Our commitment is to prepare each child/young person for adulthood through the development and promotion of individual independence, facilitating opportunities for social inclusion, as well as looking after the physical well-being for all children and young people.

Where required, travel assistance makes an important contribution to enable this commitment to be achieved.

## **Sustainability**

Bexley Council favours environmentally sustainable forms of travel, including walking, cycling and the use of public transport. The council will promote those options which make the most effective use of public resources.

## **Who will be considered for travel assistance?**

Pupils aged 16 to 19 (or 25 with an active maintained EHC Plan)

The Council is not required to provide free travel arrangements for young people aged between 16 and 19 years old, or 25 if the young person has a maintained EHC Plan. Travel assistance is therefore a discretionary service for this age group which the Council offers its residents and is subject to review annually.

Details of the support that is available is contained within this policy. This includes detail of the eligibility criteria for assistance, how to apply, what forms of travel assistance may be provided and the £400 per year contribution charge for accessing the service.

You can access policies via the Bexley Council Local Offer and council website using the following links:

- Bexley Council Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Local Offer - <https://www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/Services/3109>
- Bexley Council Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Travel Assistance Webpage - <https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/travel-assistance>

## **Section 2: Who is eligible for travel assistance?**

Each application will be assessed on its own merit, reviewing the specific individual needs of the young person against this policy. It is therefore important that all the information and evidence requested is provided by the applicant during the application process.

When making a decision about the young person's eligibility for travel assistance the Council will ask the following questions which are explained more fully in the sections that follow:

1. Is the young person ordinarily resident in the London Borough of Bexley?
2. Is the young person aged over 16 but under 19 as at 31 August 2020, (or in some cases 25 if they have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD))?
3. Does the young person attend the **nearest** suitable education establishment for their chosen study programme?
4. What is the walking distance from the young person's home to their place of education?
5. Does the young person have any Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, which limit their

- mobility or ability to use public transport and other means of travel?
6. Have all other forms of support with travel been explored and identified as unavailable/unsuitable?
  7. Are there other exceptional circumstances relating to the young person and their family that need to be taken into consideration?
  8. Has the young person paid the contribution charge for travel assistance, applicable between 16-19 yrs. old?

### **Question 1. Is the young person a resident in the London Borough of Bexley?**

Young people must be resident in the London Borough of Bexley to be considered for assistance with their travel arrangements to their place of education. Young people who are not resident in Bexley will not normally be considered for travel assistance support from the Council. Young people 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.

### **Question 2. Is the young person aged over 16 but under 19 as at the 31 August 2019 (or in some cases 25 if they have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD))?**

To be considered for travel assistance, the young person must be aged over 16 but under 19 as at the 31st of August 2021

In some cases, the Council will consider providing support beyond a young person's 19th birthday if the individual has a maintained EHC Plan supporting complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and they have been in continuous education or training since before their 19th birthday.

### **Question 3. Does the young person attend the nearest suitable education establishment for their chosen study programme?**

What education establishments will travel be considered to?

The young person's study programme or training must take place through a publicly-funded provider as listed below:

- a publicly-funded school or academy (including a free school or University Technical College (UTC))
- a publicly-funded further education institution, including sixth form college and further education college
- a local authority maintained or assisted institution providing further or higher education
- an independent specialist provider for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities if named in the young person's EHC Plan
- a learning provider that is funded by a local authority to deliver accredited programmes of learning which lead to positive outcomes (this could include colleges, charities and private learning providers).

The 'nearest education establishment' means the nearest education establishment with places available that provides the appropriate support for the young person's chosen study programme based on their

individual special educational needs (as assessed and confirmed by the Local Authority's Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities statutory assessment service). Travel assistance will not be provided on the basis of one subject being unavailable at the nearest education establishment.

The Council does not expect to provide additional travel assistance support to young people who do not present additional educational needs and attend mainstream education settings, unless exceptional circumstances are presented and evidenced. A transport network exists in the locality of Bexley with a wide range of travel options supporting access to services and activities across the whole borough as well as beyond the borough's boundaries.

What type of study programmes will be considered?

- The study programme must be full-time – equivalent to a minimum of 18 hours per week or at least 3 days per week. It does not have to last a full academic year
- The study programme is at foundation learning level, level 1, 2 or 3. The study programme should normally be at a higher level than the young person's previous achievements
- The young person is aged 19 or over, they have been in continuous education or training since before their 19 birthday, unless they have a maintained EHC plan and meet other qualifying criteria
- Travel assistance will not normally be provided to those who have left education and are returning after the age of 19yrs
- The study programme the young person attends provides a clear educational or training benefit, suited to their needs

### **Nearest Suitable Establishment for Young People with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities**

Where a young person has Special Educational needs and/or Disabilities that warrant an EHC Plan, then the nearest appropriate '(qualifying) school' will be the one named in their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) under section I.

If, because of parental preference, a young person with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities and an Education, Health and Care Plan secures a place in an education placement which is further away from the home address than the appropriate school/college identified and offered by Bexley Council as the nearest suitable school/college that can meet the specific needs, then Bexley Council will not provide travel assistance to the more distant school/college.

#### **Summary:**

- if a young person does not attend their nearest appropriate education establishment, the Council will not offer any form of travel assistance
- a young person's (without an EHC Plan) study programme or training must take place through a publicly-funded provider
- a young person's (with an EHC Plan) study programme or training must take place at the named education establishment in their EHC Plan

#### **Question 4. What is the walking distance from the young person's home to their place of education?**

Travel Assistance for young people over the age 16 is a discretionary service and therefore no 'statutory walking distance' exists. For consistency with its 5-16 travel assistance policy Bexley Council will use the 'statutory walking distance' criteria as defined in the 2014 statutory Home to School Guidance, published by the DfE as '**Over 3 miles if the child is 8 years old or older**'.

We will measure the distance using the Council's GIS mapping system. The shortest walking route along which a young person, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety when calculating the walking distance.

If the young person lives further from the education provider than the statutory walking distance, the Council assess which form of travel assistance is required to facilitate their attendance.

Where a young person is able to use public transport, it is expected travel assistance provision will take the form of a Transport for London (TfL) Zip Oyster Card (See section 5: Types of Travel Assistance Provided).

Consideration will be given in relation to the walking distance of a young person with special educational needs and disabilities.

In some circumstances, a young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities may not meet the distance criteria but is unable to walk to their place of education because of their identified needs. Where this is identified through the assessment process then a form of travel assistance will be provided once all other avenues of support have been explored.

The form of travel assistance provided will be influenced by the needs of the young person as determined through the assessment process, the distance between the home and school/education setting, and the transport options/routes available.

#### **Summary:**

- a young person who lives within the 'statutory walking distance' will not receive Council travel assistance, except where they have a special educational need or disability which significantly affects their mobility, or there are exceptional circumstances presented that require support from the Council
- in most cases, travel assistance for those who live outside the 'statutory walking distance' but who do not have a special educational need or disability will take the form of a Transport for London Zip Oyster Card (See Types of Travel Assistance below)
- for young people with a special educational need or disability, travel assistance will be provided based on an assessment of the individual's mobility, but the distance from home to school will influence the type of travel assistance. In most cases a Personal Travel Assistance Budget will be deemed sufficient to support and assist families and the young person where independent travel training is not a suitable option.

#### **Question 5. Does the young person have any Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, which limit their mobility or ability to use public transport?**

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children participate in education up to the age of 18, regardless of the young person's special educational needs and/or disabilities. Wherever possible, the Council expects parents and carers to plan and make arrangements for the young person to attend their place of education in the same way as parents and carers of pupils without an EHCP, as this is important in developing the young person's independence, social and life skills.

**No assistance will be provided unless there is evidence that all other forms of support with travel have been explored and identified as unavailable/unsuitable.**

Most Bexley children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) do not require specialised travel assistance.

Travel assistance for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending their nearest appropriate school/college as named in their EHC Plan will be provided based on the needs of the young person. In exceptional circumstances young people who do not have an EHCP but have medical needs may also be eligible for travel assistance, this is explained further in question 7.

### **How is eligibility assessed and how are types of travel assistance chosen?**

The Bexley Council Travel Assistance Commissioning Team (TACT) will assess whether the young person is eligible for travel assistance in accordance with this policy. If your young person is deemed eligible for some form of travel assistance, the Council will decide which form is most suitable and appropriate. The decision will be based on careful consideration of the following:

- whether the young person would be able to travel independently and safely to school if suitably travel trained and/or supported
- whether the young person would have considerable difficulty in walking or using public transport (accompanied as necessary) due to their special educational needs or disability
- whether the young person has a physical or medical disability (evidenced by reports from specialists/clinicians) that rules out the use of free public transport, or suitable public transport is not conveniently available – for example wheelchair users, students who require specialist seating, harnesses, head restraints or other specialist facilities
- whether the young person presents with significant and complex emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community
- the distance and complexity of the journey to and from school/college, and the public transport routes potentially available
- whether the young person would be vulnerable and at risk of danger to themselves or the general public if they use public or other transport (accompanied as necessary)

Bexley Council will then decide which form of travel assistance to provide which will reflect the considerations previously mentioned and are illustrated in the following table.

Question	Answer (Yes)	Answer (No)
1. Is the young person under the age of 25 and requires SEND support?	Go to question 2.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, , or use their DLA/PIP if required.
2. Does the young person's identified SEND impact their ability to access public transport?	Go to question 3.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, Vulnerable Groups Bursary, or use their DLA/PIP if required.
3. Does the young person's chosen study programme take place at a publicly funded provider?	Go to question 4.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, Vulnerable Groups Bursary, or use their DLA/PIP if required.
4. Is the young person's learning provider, the nearest provider that can meet their needs?	Go to question 5.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, Vulnerable Groups Bursary, or use their DLA/PIP if required.
5. Is their study programme full-time – equivalent to a minimum of 18 hours per week?	Go to question 6.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, Vulnerable Groups Bursary, or use their DLA/PIP if required.
6. Does the young person live over 3 miles from their learning provider?	Go to question 7.	Go to question 8.
7. Could the young person/family make their own travel arrangements with funding from the Council?	Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) awarded.	Contribution charge paid by Young Person and alternative travel arrangements provided.
8. Has the young person been identified as requiring specific travel assistance due to their significant and complex needs?	Contribution charge paid by Young Person and alternative travel arrangements provided.	No council travel assistance offered. Individual can apply for a Zip Oyster photocard, Vulnerable Person's Bursary, or use their DLA/PIP if required.

### Residential schools

For eligible young people aged over 16 with special educational needs and/or disabilities who attend residential educational placements, their travel assistance offer will reflect their type of placement

Travel Assistance offers will be as follows:

- termly boarding - Travel assistance will only be provided at the beginning and end of each term and the beginning and end of each half term and at other official school closures
- weekly boarding - Travel assistance will be provided to and from school at the beginning and end of the academic week and at other official school closures
- if the young person's placement is not one of the above then this will be assessed on a case by case basis as an exception to this policy

It is expected that these young people will travel either by public transport (accompanied by a parent or carer as necessary) or be transported in a parent or carer's vehicle.

Bexley Council will provide a Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) to the family/young person in these cases to cover any associated costs. In exceptional cases, specialist transport may be considered.

**Summary:**

- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their young person attends their place of education up until 18 years of age, regardless of the young person's Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.
- Travel assistance for young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will be provided based on the assessed needs of the young person and the placement named in section I of the young person's EHC Plan.
- If the young person is deemed eligible for some form of travel assistance, the Council will decide which form is most suitable based on the following:
  - the young person's ability to walk and/or use public transport (accompanied as necessary)
  - any physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport
  - if the young person has any emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community
  - the distance and complexity of the journey to and from school
  - whether the young person would be able to travel independently to school if suitably travel trained and supported

**Question 6. Have all other forms of support with travel been explored and identified as unavailable/unsuitable?**

Support is available from various organisations to enable a young person to travel to and from their place of education. Bexley Council expects that all young people and their families will have exhausted all available options for travel support from other organisations before requesting assistance from the Council, including the use of a Motability vehicle where it is provided to support the young person. In these instances, the Council would expect this to be used, if necessary, to enable the young person to access their study programme.

Bexley Council will only consider offering travel assistance to the young person if it is evidenced that all available support with travel arrangements have been exhausted and that the young person can only continue their education if the Council agrees to provide additional travel assistance.

The following are some examples of the support options available that the majority of young people use to access their study programme. Other support options are available.

**1) Transport for London – free and discounted travel**

Most young people in Bexley attending post 16 education will have their travel needs met via the free and discounted options provided by Transport for London (TfL).

Before starting their programme of study/work-based learning the young person should obtain the appropriate Oyster card. It is the young person's responsibility to ensure they meet the requirements set by TfL for retaining an Oyster card.

For further details on these options, please visit the [Transport for London website](#).

### **16+ Oyster photo card**

Residents of London boroughs aged 16 to 18 and in full-time education, or on a work-based learning scheme of at least 12 hours per week, can apply for a 16+ Oyster photo card. This includes apprenticeships.

The card gives:

- free travel on London buses and trams
- half adult rate Oyster single fares on the tube, DLR, London Overground and some national rail services
- child rate travelcard season tickets on the tube, DLR, London Overground and some national rail services

### **Apprentice Oyster card**

Young people aged over 18 years who live in Bexley and are on the first year of an apprenticeship that will last for more than 12 months are eligible to apply for an Apprentice Oyster card.

The Apprentice Oyster card gives a 30% discount on bus, tram, tube, DLR, London Overground and national rail travelcard season tickets.

### **18+ Student Oyster photo card**

18+ Student Oyster photo cards are available to young people who are aged 18 and over, and who are attending a full-time course at colleges, schools and universities registered on the TfL 18+ Student Oyster photo card scheme.

The 18+ student card gives a 30% discount on bus, tram, tube, DLR, London Overground and national rail travelcard season tickets.

If the young person is able to use and access public transport, then the Council will expect the current travel assistance offer from Transport for London (TfL) to be appropriate. This means that most young people attending college/sixth form will not require any further support from the council for travel arrangements.

In some circumstances, the Council will agree to provide a travel card that allows travel on the London Underground and London Overground trains in addition to bus and tram travel.

## **2) The 16-19 Bursary Fund**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, administered by individual education providers, is available to support any young person who faces genuine financial barriers to participation in education, including transport costs. There are two types of 16-19 bursary available:

### **(a) Vulnerable Groups Bursary**

Those most in need are eligible for a vulnerable student bursary of up to £1,200 per year. To qualify, the young person must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- the young person is in or has recently left local authority care
- the young person gets Income Support (or Universal Credit in place of Income Support) in their name
- the young person is disabled and gets both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (or Universal Credit in place of ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their name

To receive the maximum bursary the programme of study must last for 30 weeks or more. If the programme is shorter than 30 weeks, the young person may receive less.

#### **(b) Discretionary bursary**

The young person could get a discretionary bursary if they do not qualify for the vulnerable student bursary. Education providers may, at their discretion, distribute any remaining funds to any young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of the young person. This is targeted at young people facing financial barriers to participation, including transport costs.

All education providers must make available a copy of their 16-19 Bursary Fund policy. Applications should be made directly to the education provider.

For further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund visit [www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund](http://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund) or on the [Bexley Local Offer website](#).

### **3) Discretionary Learner Support**

If the young person is aged 19 or over, on a further education course and facing financial hardship, they could get Discretionary Learner Support (DLS). This is similar to the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

The young person must apply directly to their learning provider (e.g. their college) for DLS. How much the young person receives will depend on their circumstances. The money can help with learning costs, including transport.

For more information visit [www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support](http://www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support).

### **4) Residential Support Scheme**

The Residential Support Scheme is for young people aged 16-18. If the programme of study being followed is not available locally and is more than 15 miles from the home, or more than a two-hour return journey away, the young person can apply for help with the cost of term-time accommodation.

How much assistance the young person receives will depend on household income and where the education provider is based.

For further information on the Residential Support Scheme, including eligibility criteria, visit [www.gov.uk/residential-support-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/residential-support-scheme).

## 5) Residential Bursary Fund

Young people aged 16-18 may be able to get a bursary towards the cost of accommodation from some specialist residential colleges. This is different from the Residential Support Scheme.

Most of these colleges are 'Specialist Residential Centres' for subjects like agriculture, art and design or horticulture. Each has its own eligibility criteria, often including parental income. To apply for assistance you should contact the college directly.

**Summary:** Bexley Council expects that all young people and families as part of the application process will evidence that all available options for travel support from other organisations have been exhausted, before the Council accepts an application for assistance.

Examples of the support options available include:

- Transport for London
  - 16+ Oyster photo card
  - Apprentice Oyster card
  - 18+ Student Oyster photo card
- The 16-19 Bursary Fund
  - Vulnerable Groups Bursary
  - Discretionary Bursary
- Discretionary Learner Support
- Residential Support Scheme
- Residential Bursary Fund

## Question 7. Are there other circumstances relating to the young person and family that need to be taken into consideration?

Each application is assessed based on the individual circumstances presented to the Council. Types of circumstances taken into account when deciding if assistance will be provided include:

### Temporary medical conditions

We will consider an application for travel assistance for the young person if they have a temporary medical need, even if living within the walking distance criteria.

The Applicant will need to provide written evidence from an appropriate medical practitioner/specialist confirming that the young person has specialist transport requirements which cannot be met by public transport (accompanied or unaccompanied) or a vehicle available for use by the family.

Any assistance provided will be provided for a time limited period and will be reviewed at regular intervals. When the young person's medical need no longer requires council support, then travel assistance arrangements will stop. Families must notify the council at the earliest opportunity when the young person's medical condition/need has changed/ been resolved. We will expect families to have exhausted all other travel options before applying for travel assistance.

### **Young person(s) with disabled parents**

There is an expectation that families will support the young person access their place of education. If there are circumstances, such as a parental disability, that prevents this from being possible then the Council may provide travel assistance to support the young person even if they live within the walking distance criteria. However, if the young person or another member of their family receives the mobility component payment as part of their disability living allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) then it will be expected that this will be adequate provision in most circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances assistance may be provided, each application will be assessed on a case by case basis.

### **Young People with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities in Care**

Travel support may be available for young people in care, to ensure their care arrangements are supported by appropriate home to school travel arrangements. The young person's Care Plan sets out how the young person will be cared for and how their needs will be met, this includes travel arrangements from home to their education placement. The Care Plan is agreed at the young person's statutory Child in Care Review, which is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer.

### **Parent/Carer Work Arrangements**

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring the young person attends their place of education. This may include making or assisting with travel arrangements to and from school/college and/or accompanying the young person.

Parent/Carer work arrangements which conflict with the young person's travel to and from their education placement will not normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance. Parents are expected to utilise all support/alternative care options available to them and both employee and employer would be expected to make reasonable adjustments.

Some examples that the council would not ordinarily see as exceptional circumstances (in their own right):

- Single parent families
- Parent(s) who work
- Having other children to look after and/or at other schools/colleges
- Parents/students unable to drive or having access to a car
- Students in wheelchairs

**Summary:** The Council may consider an application for travel assistance for a young person, if:

- they have a temporary medical need
- a parent/carers has a recognised disability (confirmed by a GP) that prevents them from walking with/taking the young person to their place of education
- travel support may be available for young people in care, this will be set out in the young person's Care Plan

- parent/Carer work arrangements which conflict with the young person's travel to and from school/college will not normally be considered as an exceptional circumstance and should be addressed with the parent's employer

### **Question 8. Has the young person paid the contribution charge for travel assistance?**

There is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide travel assistance beyond the completion of Year 11, e.g. statutory/compulsory school age.

For eligible young people who became 16 years of age during or after the 2018/19 academic year who are assessed as requiring transport to and from their place of education then a £400 contribution fee towards travel arrangements costs must be paid before travel arrangements are put in place. The contribution charge represents less than 7% of the average cost of travel provided by the Council, the Council will continue to contribute the remaining 93%.

To assist families, where a Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) is provided, the contribution fee will be waived (no charge) for PTABs up to the value of £5,000 per academic year. The contribution fee will be deducted for PTABs over the value of £5,000 per academic year.

**Travel assistance arrangements will only be provided upon receipt or commitment via direct debit of payment of the relevant charge.**

**Summary:** The charge for Post 16 Travel Assistance is £400 Per Annum. This equates to £2.11 per day based on attendance of 190 days for the academic year and is on average less than 7% of the average total travel assistance cost of £6,300.

## **Section 3: How to apply for travel assistance?**

### **Complete an Application Form**

If you believe your young person may require travel assistance you should complete a Travel Assistance application form via the Travel Assistance webpage.

Webpage: <https://www.bexley.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/send-travel-assistance-or>

Email: [tact@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:tact@bexley.gov.uk)

### **Notification of decision**

All applications will receive careful consideration. Bexley Council will aim to inform parents/carers of the local authority's decision in writing within 4 weeks of receipt of the completed application. Notification of decisions may exceed the standard turnaround due to seasonal pressures or during the travel assistance admissions window when applicants will be informed after the window deadline.

To guarantee travel assistance being in place for the start of the academic year then applications must be submitted before the published deadline date. Where applications are submitted after the published deadline date and travel assistance has been awarded, then it is the parent/carers responsibility to make necessary travel arrangements for the young person's attendance at their school/college.

**Reimbursement of travel costs will not be considered during this period.**

## Section 4 Assessing Your Application

### Application Assessment

The Travel Assistance Commissioning Team (TACT) will assess your application for Travel Assistance. The team aims to let you know the outcome of their assessment within 4 weeks of the date they receive your application. In circumstances where additional information is required from other professionals then the assessment process may exceed 4 weeks.

If your application is successful, then consideration will then be given as to what type of travel assistance will be provided.

Travel Assistance will reflect the young person's needs and circumstances and will be selected from the range of options available. Factors that will influence what Travel Assistance will be provided include:

- the needs of the young person
- the distance from home to school/college
- public transport routes
- whether there is already transport going to the school/college
- the most cost-effective mode of travel assistance

### Travel Assistance Provision Exclusions

A young person will not be eligible for travel assistance if any of the following statements apply:

- a) their chosen study programme takes place at a privately-funded organization (unless named in the Young Person's EHC Plan)
- b) the young person is employed and starting or continuing an apprenticeship. Apprentices aged 16 to 18 can apply for a 16+ Oyster photo card. Young people aged over 18 years and in the first year of their apprenticeship are eligible to apply for an Apprentice Oyster card.
- c) the young person's study programme is at Level 4 or higher, including a foundation degree. Education levels are explained on the government website <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>].

The purpose of travel assistance is to support young people accessing their education for the start and end of the standard timetable at the education establishment. Travel assistance will not be available for any of the following unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so:

- hospital, medical, or dental appointments
- young people taken ill during the school day
- [schools where parents/carers are making their own arrangements]
- travel to and from after-school clubs and other extra-curricular activities
- educational placements which are not the nearest that are able to meet the needs of the young person
- travel to and from work experience

Travel Assistance will be planned to use the most efficient route available to maximise the use of resources available to Bexley Council whilst ensuring journey times are not longer than necessary and in line with

national guidance. Variations in student timetables will not be accommodated unless there is an exceptional reason why this is required.

## **Multiple home addresses**

When assessing an application, Bexley Council will use the young person's 'main residence' for assessment purposes. Where a young person has two home addresses then the provision will only be provided from their 'main residence'.

'Main residence' will be considered as being the address at which the young person is registered whilst attending school, with their GP, and, if applicable, the address of the parent who is in receipt of Child Benefit or Child Tax Credits for that young person.

## **Review of Provision & Eligibility**

**Where travel assistance is approved and provided, Bexley Council will review these arrangements on an annual basis and therefore are subject to change.**

This will help ensure that travel assistance arrangements continue to meet the young person's needs as well as helping them move towards greater independence for adulthood. Travel Assistance will be discussed at the young person's Annual Review if they have an EHC plan.

Unless travel assistance has been agreed for a limited period e.g. for one term only, the young person changes school/college, they move home during an academic year, or the young person's needs change significantly, travel assistance arrangements will stay in place for the academic year in which they were assessed as eligible. Whilst the form of travel assistance will not change, sometimes during the year collection/drop off times and/or the route a young person may travel on may change. We will endeavour to keep changes to a minimum, but where a change is required, we will aim to inform you with as much notice as possible.

If the young person changes school/college (including site) or their home address changes then you will need to re-apply for travel assistance for reassessment. Travel assistance will only be provided if the young person continues to meet the eligibility criteria. Alterations will not be made to your young person's current provision until the re-assessment has been completed.

In addition to the above, Bexley Council reserves the right to withdraw travel assistance where:

- a) the education or training provider states that attendance has not been satisfactory (measured over the previous term)
- b) it is proven that assistance was obtained on the basis of fraudulent or misleading information, or
- c) where changes in the individual or household circumstances of the young person result in either the young person no longer being eligible for assistance or no longer requiring assistance

## **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 young person's individual circumstances have changed and either they are no longer eligible for support, or they have been assessed as not requiring such support.

Assistance may also cease on the request of the parent/carer or young person 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 this with immediate effect.

## **Section 5: Types of Travel Assistance Provided**

If it is decided that Bexley Council will provide travel assistance to support the young person to attend their education placement, a range of options will be considered. The type of travel assistance provided will reflect the evidence and information provided to ensure their needs are supported accordingly.

To support the young person's needs and assist their move towards independence for adulthood the Council will explore travel options that offer the greatest level of independence to the individual based on their needs.

The following travel options will be considered, please note that this list is not exhaustive and other forms of travel assistance may also be provided:

- reimbursement of the cost of travel pass/Oyster Card for the young person and/or parent/carer
- walking escort or buddy option to travel on public transport
- Independent Travel Training (ITT)
- Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB)
- pick up point collection transport
- shared transport using minibus or taxi services
- in very exceptional circumstances and based on individual needs, dedicated transport service

### **Walking Escort**

Where appropriate the Council may consider providing an escort to accompany the young person to walk to school/college or travel on public transport. Such a scheme may be a first step towards introducing pupils to independent travel training and seeks to improve confidence and independence by providing a more 'normal' travel experience for the young person. Escorts may accompany more than one young person or even introduce a 'walking bus' route (subject to satisfactory completion of a risk assessment).

### **Independent Travel Training**

The aim of Independent Travel Training is to support a young person to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to effectively deal with and resolve a range of scenarios that they might encounter when travelling on public transport or travelling independently.

Some benefits of Independent Travel Training for the young person are:

- increased independence, confidence and personal mobility
- increased access to education opportunities at colleges and universities, local services and leisure activities
- reduced reliance on family members to provide on-going travel to access current and future activities and services
- improvement in life skills, such as handling money, personal and road safety skills

- increased opportunity to gain employment

If the Travel Assistance Commissioning Team identify through either the assessment process or annual reviews that a young person may have the potential to be supported to travel independently through a travel training programme then they will arrange for their travel training provider to conduct an assessment to decide if training is a suitable option for the young person. Parents/carers will not be able to opt out of this provision without reasoned justification. If the outcome of the assessment identifies that the individual is not suitable for Independent Travel Training at that time, then an alternative method of travel assistance will be made by the Council.

## **Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB)**

Young People eligible for travel assistance may be provided with a PTAB if it is appropriate to meet the needs of the young person and is the most economic use of public resources.

**For Post 16 -25 students a PTAB provision will be the default assistance and alternative assistance will only be provided where it is evidenced that all forms of other support including bursary funding have been exhausted.**

Where a Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) is provided, the contribution fee of £400 per annum will be waived (no charge) for PTABs up to the value of £5,000 per academic year.

For Personal Travel Assistance Budgets (PTAB) over £5,000 per academic year the maximum contribution fee of £400 will be deducted.

Over 150 families/young people have benefitted from using a Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) to make their own travel arrangements to school/college in 2020/21.

Benefits of this type of travel assistance are:

- the young person and their family are able to make their own arrangements to best suit the needs of the young person
- travel arrangements organised by the young person and/or their family can be tailored to fit around work commitments and other siblings
- examples of the type of travel arrangements which can be organised by the young person or family include:
  - using the family car
  - paying a carer to support the young person to and from their place of education
  - paying for a Bus/Train pass so a parent can travel on public transport with the young person
  - pool payments with another family to make joint travel arrangements
- the family are in control of arrangements and can make changes at any time
- provides greater flexibility to support collection/drop off at alternative locations or the attendance at after school clubs/activities in the community

Families are able to request this as an option at any time by contacting the Travel Assistance Commissioning Team (TACT).

This option may be of interest to families if:

- they want to take the young person to their education placement but need support to make it financially viable
- the young person has very complex needs and parents/carers want to make their own travel arrangements
- parent/carers want to combine the Council's contribution with their own personal finances to provide the young person with bespoke travel assistance to meet their needs and fit in with their family circumstances

The PTAB is not taxed and does not affect any other benefits that are received; the only requirement is that the young person attends school/college or training regularly and on time. A PTAB can be refused or withdrawn if these conditions are not met.

Please note attendance levels will be monitored and money will be reclaimed for non-attendance or unauthorised absences.

If this form of travel assistance is provided, it will be the parents/carers' responsibility to ensure that the young person:

- is able to travel safely
- attends their education placement regularly and on time
- is able to be effectively educated once they arrive at their education placement

The value of a PTAB is calculated based on the distance from the young person's home address to their place of education

Direct payments/personal transport budgets payment will be made to the parent's bank account, in arrears, after any travel has taking place.

## **Arranged Transport**

If all other options have been explored and identified as not suitable, such as public transport, independent travel training, Personal Travel Assistance Budget or walking escorts, then Bexley Council may consider providing a standard vehicle to transport the young person to and from their place of education.

Normally, arranged transport is planned to collect many passengers from agreed collection points (Home address or identified collection point) into the same education establishment. Times are not fixed and may change at any time throughout the year to accommodate additional pupils joining or leaving the service.

Where possible and appropriate, vehicles may collect passengers that attend different schools/education placements for an effective use of resources.

Assistance to schools/colleges will only be provided for the journey from home to the educational establishment and home again at the start and end of the day. Support will not normally be provided to meet individual timetables or participation outside of standard college times, except in exceptional circumstances.

All staff are DBS checked and trained. Staff will be provided by a qualified, registered transport provider, working to contractual standards set by the Council.

## **Collection Points**

The Travel Assistance Commissioning Team may identify that the appropriate form of travel assistance for a young person is by means of a collection point.

Bexley Council uses collection points to support the development of independence and preparation for adulthood. A collection point will be an identified safe location within a reasonable walk of the Young Person's home address.

If the young person is accessing a collection point, their parent/carer will be responsible for ensuring that they get safely to and from the collection point at the appropriate time. If a young person's travel assistance offer requires them to walk to a collection point, then it is expected that an adult will accompany them where necessary. The parent/carer will be responsible for the young person when they are waiting for transport, and when they leave the transport at the end of the day.

In the event of an emergency, late running of the service, or an adult not being present at a collection point, the young person will be taken to an agreed safe point for parental collection.

## **Passenger Assistants**

There is no statutory entitlement to a Passenger Assistant on any route. Any provision of passenger assistants will be based on the individual needs of each passenger and where the use of a Passenger Assistant will mitigate high levels of risk. If after assessment Bexley Council identify that a young person does not require the support of a Passenger Assistant, then one will not be provided.

A passenger assistant may be used when there are a number of passengers with significant and complex needs who are travelling on the same vehicle.

This will require a separate assessment and will be reviewed on a regular basis to establish if the continued provision of a passenger assistant is required.

Passenger assistants are not authorised to administer emergency rescue medication. Emergency services will be called if a pupil has a medical emergency whilst on the vehicle.

## **Parent/carer Responsibilities**

Parents/Carers play a key part in ensuring the smooth running of the young person's travel assistance.

This can be supported by:

- providing home and work telephone numbers and an emergency contact number and address
- notifying Bexley Integrated Transport Unit (BITU) of any changes to normal arrangements; it is not sufficient to inform the assistant and driver. Changes to address must be notified to the Travel Assistance Commissioning Team (TACT) for possible reassessment
- recognising that travel assistance is provided for the benefit of the child/young person making sure that the young person is ready at least ten minutes before the pick-up time; transport can wait no more than three minutes after arrival
- bringing the young person to the vehicle and assisting with placing them on the vehicle
- always being at the set-down point to meet the young person at the end of the day, providers/contractors must ensure the young person is handed over to a responsible adult

- telephoning 0203 045 4431 or emailing BITU@bexley.gov.uk, BITU as soon as possible if the young person is sick or unable to attend the education placement for any reason
- ensuring the young person behaves 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 all staff with courtesy

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that the young person is on time at the correct location for collection and they are available to receive their young person after school at the designated pick up point.

If parents/carers are late on a regular basis for either the pick up or drop off, they will be contacted by the Council in order to work together to resolve the situation. If the lateness continues the Council will decide on an appropriate course of action which may result in withdrawal of assistance.

If travel arrangements require an appropriate adult to be at home or at the collection point to meet the young person (as part of the drop off arrangements) but for some reason are not present at the agreed scheduled set-down time then transport will wait three minutes after the scheduled set-down time and then continue the remainder of the journey, the transport provider will then attempt to drop the young person off for a 2nd time after completing the remainder of the route. If unsuccessful, then the young person will be taken to an appropriate location. Parents/carers will be expected to make arrangements to collect the young person from this location as soon as possible.

Parents/carers will be responsible for the cost of any extra travel involved and supervision provided. If such incidents occur frequently Bexley Council will suspend provision of transport and families will be responsible for travel arrangements to ensure that the young person attends their education placement.

Both you and the young person's education establishment are expected to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure appropriate behaviour on home to school travel and to take necessary action when incidents of unacceptable behaviour are reported. It is appreciated that some children and young people with special educational needs will display behaviour which is related to their special educational need. In this situation we will work with the school and yourself to improve behaviour so that the young person can travel to and from school safely. Serious or persistent incidents will lead to Bexley Council suspending transport. Parents/carers will then be responsible for travel arrangements to ensure that the young person attends school/college.

## **Section 6: Formal Appeal Process**

### **What if I disagree with a decision?**

Where an application for home to school travel assistance has been refused, or parents and carers wish for further consideration of their young person's circumstances, the following process will apply.

#### **Stage 1 - Review**

Parent/carers should submit a request for a review by submitting a completed appeal form within 20 working days of the original notification of decision.

All requests for reviews must be made using the agreed appeals form, via an online appeal process available via the [Bexley Local Offer website](#).

The request for review must detail all the options explored and considered by the family to make their own travel arrangements, and why these options are not suitable/available.

New information/additional evidence not included in the original application must also be provided. This should support the circumstances and reasons why it is felt travel assistance should be provided, and where possible this information/evidence should be from relevant professionals clearly identifying how specific needs/circumstances mean that travel assistance is required.

Information submitted for the appeal will then be considered in addition to the original evidence provided, the assessment decision reviewed by the Head of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities & Inclusion. Parents/carers will receive a decision within 20 working days from the date of receipt of the stage 1 appeal.

## **Stage 2 - Appeal**

Parents/carers have 20 working days to challenge and appeal the review decision. The stage 2 appeal will be reviewed by the Independent Transport Appeal Panel within 40 working days of receipt of the Stage 2 appeal. The panel will consist of officers independent of the process to date and suitably experienced. Appeals should be submitted with supporting evidence along with the stage 1 decision. The panel will consider the appeal in line with this policy. This decision will be sent by letter within 5 working days.

During each stage of the appeal process the reviewing officers/panel will use the evidence available to them to review the previous decision and decide whether the policy has been applied correctly. When additional information is submitted for consideration, it may be helpful to consider providing any of the following:

- details of how the young person currently travels around outside of school/college
- examples of incidents/concerns as a result of the Council's original decision
- medical evidence from a medical professional
- what efforts have been made by family and friends to support the young person with their travel assistance and attendance at school/college
- evidence that alternative travel options have been explored, along with evidence why they are not suitable

The appeal process (detailed below) is separate from any complaints or concerns that you may wish to raise around the quality of the service that you and/or the young person has received.

1. Officer A declines travel assistance application or offers travel arrangements the parent/carer considers 'unsuitable' or 'unreasonable'.
2. Parent/carer challenges (within 20 working days), Officer A's decision on the basis of:
  - entitlement
  - distance measured
  - route safety
  - form of assistance provided
  - other reasoning
3. Stage 1: Senior Officer (Officer B) reviews (within 20 working days) Officer A's decision and sends the parent/carer a written notification of the outcome including:
  - detailed reasoning for decision made

- notification of option to escalate to Stage 2 (an appeal panel) if necessary
- 4. Parent/carer challenges Officer B's (the Senior Officer) decision (within 20 working days)
- 5. Stage 2: Review by an Appeal Panel (within 40 working days)
  - Independent Appeal Panel (Officer A or B must not sit on the panel) hears written/verbal representation from parent. They are independent of the process to date and suitably qualified.
  - Independent Appeal Panel sends decision letter to parent (within 5 working days) including how to escalate the case to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

## Complaints

The Council's travel assistance appeal procedure in respect of eligible young people 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 the young person remain dissatisfied and believe that the procedure has not been followed properly, they may complain under the Council's 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](mailto:complaints@bexley.gov.uk).
- by letter to: The Complaints Team, LB of Bexley, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, DA6 7AT
- telephone 020 8303 7777
- in person at the Civic Offices

Further information can be found on the Bexley Council's [Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Travel Assistance webpage](#).