

Home to School & Post 16 Travel and Transport Policy for Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) 2026-2027



**To request this in another format
such as audio, large print or Braille
please phone 0303 333 4300 or email
hdl@halton.gov.uk**

যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা ইংরেজী না হয়ে থাকে একে আপনি অন্য ভাষায় আমাদের সার্ভিসেস সম্পর্কে তথ্য জানতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে 0303 333 4300 নম্বরে ফোন করুন অথবা যফস(হেথথমড্‌হ.মড্‌.ন.এই ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

यदि आप की पहली भाषा अंग्रेज़ी नहीं है और आप हमारी सेवाओं के बारे में जानकारी किसी अन्य भाषा में चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमें 0303 333 4300 पर फोन करें या hdl@halton.gov.uk पर ई-मेल भेजें

Jeżeli angielski nie jest Twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz informacji o naszych usługach w innym języku, prosimy o zatelefonowanie do nas pod numer: 0303 333 4300 lub wysłanie maila do: hdl@halton.gov.uk

如果你的母语不是英语，而你希望得到有关我们服务的其它语言版本的信息，请致电 0303 333 4300 或者发送电邮至 hdl@halton.gov.uk 联络我们。

اگر آپ کی پہلی زبان انگریزی نہیں ہے اور آپ ہماری خدمات کے بارے میں معلومات کسی دوسری زبان میں چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہمیں 0303 333 4300 پر فون یا hdl@halton.gov.uk پر ای میل کریں

Contents

Contents

1.0 Context	5
2.0 Principles	5
3.0 Travel Assistance to Access Education at School/College	6
4.0 PART A: Travel Assistance to Access Education for Children and Young People from Pre School Age to Age 16	6
4.1 Legislation and Responsibilities: Parent/Carer Responsibilities	6
4.2 Council Responsibilities	7
Distance.....	7
Low Income Family	7
Measuring Distance	7
Safe Walking Route	7
Special Educational Needs or Disability	8
4.3 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Children	8
4.4 Exceptional Circumstances	9
4.5 Travel Assistance	9
Non-Use and Attendance Monitoring.....	9
4.6 Types of Travel Assistances Provided.....	9
5.0 PART B: Travel Assistance to Access Education/Training for Young People Post 16 ..	12
5.1 Introduction.....	12
5.2 Legislation and Responsibilities.....	12
5.3 Eligibility Criteria	13
5.4 Travel assistance.....	13
5.5 Types of Travel Assistance Provided.....	14
5.6 Other Transport Options Available.....	15
6.0 PART C: Application, Review and Appeals Processes.....	16
6.1 Formal Application for Assistance	16
6.2 Application Process	16
6.3 Review Process	17
6.4 Changes in Circumstances.....	17
6.5 Health and Safety	17
7.0 Curriculum Travel During the School Day.....	18
8.0 Change of Address	18
9.0 Temporary Relocation	18
10.0 Shared Care Arrangements.....	19
11.0 Safeguarding	19
12.0 Appeals Process.....	19
Initial Decision	19
Stage 1 Appeal – Review by Senior Officer.....	19
Stage 2 Appeal – Independent Appeal Panel	19

DRAFT

1.0 Context

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

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly.

The duty on local authorities is to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at schools for eligible children. Schedule 35B of the Act defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16) in an authority's area.

Local Authorities are required by law to provide some bus services that are socially necessary. These services also help children and young people to get to/access schools and other places for learning.

Local authorities are also required to publish their Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy by 31st August each year, and, as recommended within Department for Education Guidance, this document integrates that strategy within this policy document. These wider policies are detailed within the Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP3) found at www.halton.gov.uk/ltp3.

This Policy will be reviewed annually and published in the Education and Families section of the Council website at www.halton.gov.uk. Hard copies can be requested by calling 0303 333 4300, or emailing hdl@halton.gov.uk.

2.0 Principles

In line with current legislation¹, this policy uses the term '*travel assistance*' to reflect the wide range of support options available. This assistance does not necessarily involve the Council providing transport directly. Each application for travel assistance will be considered individually. The Council will assess:

- Its legal responsibilities,
- The specific needs of the applicant,
- How to use public resources efficiently,
- And any other relevant factors related to the request.

This policy supports the priorities detailed within the Council's overarching policies and plans, and aligns the principles set out via government guidance², alongside principles of inclusion, equality, sustainability, and the effective use of public resources.

Halton Borough Council strongly supports measures which encourage local communities to use environmentally sustainable forms of travel, detailed within the Halton Local Transport

¹ The Education Act 1996

² DfE Travel to school for children of compulsory age statutory guidance January 2024

DfE Post-16 transport and travel assistance to education and training statutory guidance January 2019.

Plan (LTP) found at www.halton.gov.uk/ltp3. This contains a wide range of measures to improve access to personal development, education, training and work-based learning opportunities for:

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

This policy reflects current national legislation. This policy could change before a child and young person completes their time at school. School admission preferences should not be made on the assumption that the same set of eligibility criteria will apply throughout a child and young person's education.

3.0 Travel Assistance to Access Education at School/College

This policy outlines the travel assistance that may be available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties who are resident within the Borough of Halton and children and young people in the care of Halton Borough Council.

This policy is set out in three parts as follows:

Part A –

Pre-School children (age 3-4) attending nursery, or a mainstream or special school

Children of compulsory school age (5-16) attending a mainstream school, a resource base within a mainstream school or a special school

Part B –

Young people aged 16 to 25 years with special educational needs and disabilities attending post 16 education

Part C – Application, Review, and Appeals processes

4.0 PART A: Travel Assistance to Access Education for Children and Young People from Pre School Age to Age 16

This section of the policy applies to children and young people of pre-school age, up to the age of 16, who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties. It aims to support eligible children and young people in accessing their educational setting by providing appropriate travel assistance at the start and end of the school day, each weekday during term time.

4.1 Legislation and Responsibilities: Parent/Carer Responsibilities

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their compulsory school aged children are registered at a school and attend regularly, or to make suitable arrangements for home education or education other than at school.

The aim of this policy is to work with children, young people and families to access education in a safe and sustainable way. The majority of children and young people in Halton with special educational needs or a disability including those with an Education Health and Care plan (EHC plan) do not receive or require specialised travel assistance from the Council in order to access education. Wherever possible, it is expected that parent/carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties, make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as parents/carers of children and young people who do not have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties.

4.2 Council Responsibilities

Local authorities must make free-of-charge travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance at school of eligible children resident in their area, subject to certain conditions:

Distance

A child is eligible if they attend their nearest suitable school³ and any of the following apply:

- the school is more than 2 miles away and the child is under 8
- the school is more than 3 miles away and the child is 8 or over

Low Income Family

Children from a low family income where the child or young person is entitled to free school meals or where one or both parents are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit⁴ will qualify for free school transport if,

- aged 8 to 11, they go to their nearest school and that school is more than 2 miles from their home
- aged 11 to 16 if they are attending a school more than 2 miles, but not more than 6 miles from the home address, and it is one of the three nearest suitable qualifying schools. This distance is extended from 6 to 15 miles if the school selected is the nearest qualifying school based on their religion or belief and there is no suitable qualifying school nearer to home.

Measuring Distance

When determining eligibility for a travel pass, the child's permanent home address is used. Distance will be measured by the shortest walking route from the main entrance of the child's permanent home address (including flats and apartments) to the main entrance of the school using the Council's measuring systems considering safe walking routes.

Safe Walking Route

A child is eligible for free travel assistance if the only available walking route to their nearest

³ Whilst parents/carers have the right to express a preference for which school they wish their child to attend, a child and young person who attends a school which is further away than the nearest suitable qualifying school with places available, will not be eligible for travel assistance even if the distance from home to the school they attend is more than the statutory walking distance.

⁴ Proof of entitlement is required at the time of application, annual confirmation to confirm low-income status will be required.

suitable school is deemed unsafe, even if the distance is within the statutory walking limit. Local authorities must assess the safety of the route, taking into account factors such as traffic volume, speed, road crossings, lighting, and the age and capability of the child. The assessment should consider whether a child could reasonably be expected to walk the route safely, either alone or accompanied.

Special Educational Needs or Disability

Travel assistance is not automatically provided for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties. Those who do not qualify under statutory criteria - such as distance, low income, or unsafe walking routes - may still apply if they are attending the nearest suitable school for their needs and are unable to walk there, even with adult accompaniment, due to their SEND, disability, or mobility challenges.

Each application will be assessed individually. In determining whether a child can reasonably be expected to walk to school, the local authority will consider:

- Whether the child could walk if accompanied,
- And whether it is reasonable to expect the parent or carer to provide that accompaniment.

The general expectation is that a parent or carer will accompany their child where necessary, unless there is a valid reason why this would not be reasonable.

Work commitments alone will not be considered a sufficient reason to provide free home-to-school transport. While many parents face challenges balancing work and school schedules, this is not regarded as an exceptional circumstance.

The local authority will ensure equality of opportunity for disabled parents. Where a parent's disability prevents them from accompanying their child along a walking route that would otherwise require adult supervision, the authority may consider reasonable adjustments - such as providing free home-to-school transport for the child⁵.

4.3 Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Children

Parents or carers of children under 16 who receive the Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) may be asked whether they are willing and able to use their Motability vehicle to transport their child to and from school. This request applies only where it is reasonable and safe to do so.

Where a parent or carer chooses to use their own vehicle in these circumstances, they may be eligible to apply for a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) to help cover travel costs.

It is important to note that receiving benefits such as DLA, PIP, a Motability vehicle, or a Foster Care Allowance does not affect a child's eligibility for free home-to-school travel assistance.

⁵ Where applications for assistance are received on the grounds of a child or young person's SEND, disability or mobility challenges, or a parent/carer is referencing their own disability, the appropriate documentary evidence to support those issues or challenges will be requested as part of the assessment process.

4.4 Exceptional Circumstances

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

Specific consideration will be given to:

- A child/young person who has a temporary disability or illness;
- A child/young person whose parents/carers who have their own medical needs or learning difficulties impacts on their ability to transport the child/young person where necessary⁶.

4.5 Travel Assistance

If Halton Borough Council agrees to provide travel assistance to support access to education, it will be arranged in a cost-effective manner, tailored to the child or young person's individual needs.

An initial eligibility assessment will be carried out by a designated Council officer. It is essential that parents and carers actively participate in this process to ensure that all relevant information is considered.

Each case is assessed individually, and the Council may request medical or professional evidence to support the application.

Non-Use and Attendance Monitoring

If travel assistance is provided but not used, or if a child or young person's school attendance falls to 90% or below, the Council may withdraw the service. In some cases, charges may apply for unused transport. Travel assistance will remain suspended until attendance improves to an acceptable level.

If a child or young person with SEND or mobility difficulties is unwell, parents/carers must notify the Transport Co-ordination Department the day before travel is required, if it is known that the child will be off school the next day or as early as possible on the day of travel if the illness has only been made known on the day.

Following an absence, parents/carers must notify the Transport Co-ordination Department the day before the child is due to return to school in order for transport to be reinstated.

Transport will be temporarily withdrawn during periods of illness and reinstated once the child is well enough to return to education.

4.6 Types of Travel Assistances Provided

The nature and mode of travel assistance will be determined by the Council and will be one that is consistent with the Council's duty to secure Value for Money and the needs of the child.

⁶ Where applications for assistance are received on the grounds of a child or young person's SEND, disability or mobility challenges, or a parent/carer is referencing their own disability, the appropriate documentary evidence to support those issues or challenges will be requested as part of the assessment process

A) Travel Pass: A Travel Pass provides free access to public transport for eligible children and young people to travel between home and school during the academic year.

- Valid for school-related journeys on public transport.
- May be extended to a parent or travel buddy if accompaniment is necessary.
- Includes access to Independent Travel Training where applicable, to support safe and confident travel.

B) Independent Travel Training: Independent Travel Training empowers children and young people to travel safely and confidently on public transport. It focuses on developing personal, social, and life skills, enhancing road safety awareness, and promoting independence.

Key Benefits

- Builds confidence and independence.
- Develops personal safety and road safety skills.
- Enhances life skills such as:
 - Using money
 - Buying tickets
 - Planning journeys
 - Navigating buses and trains

Independent travel training may be considered for secondary school age children and young people. Independent Travel Training will be a part of planning for all children from Year 8 onwards as part of the child or young person's Education Health and Care Plan Annual Review.

Independent Travel Training is suitable for a wide range of children and young people including (but not exhaustive):

- Transferring from mainstream to special schools
- Attending mainstream schools or resource bases
- Attending pupil referral units
- In post-16 education
- Referred by parents or educational settings

An initial review of travel assistance applications will be undertaken to determine suitability. If appropriate, a qualified Travel Trainer conducts will conduct detailed assessment in collaboration with:

- The young person
- Parents/carers
- School staff
- Other professionals

Training Programme

- Tailored, one-to-one support using the Travel Training Toolkit.
- Criteria for successful completion are based on a comprehensive training plan.

- Final assessment shared with parents/carers.
- Completion is signed off by the Council and parents/carer.

Contact Information

For referrals, the Travel Training Toolkit, or more details: 0151 511 7444
Email: transportco-ordination@halton.gov.uk

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

D) Walking Bus: The Council is keen to reduce the number of vehicle journeys in and around the Borough, especially at peak times, and to reduce traffic movements in close proximity to schools. A child/young person may be allocated a space on a walking bus scheme. These involve several children/young people walking to and from school under the guidance and support of a Passenger Assistant.

E) Personal Travel Budget (PTB): The Council may provide parents/carers with an amount of money to enable them to provide personalised travel arrangements through a Personal Travel Budget (PTB). A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a financial allowance provided by the Council to parents/carers to arrange personalised travel assistances for their child or young person to attend school or college. Personal Travel Budgets offer families flexibility to choose how they facilitate travel to school, as long as the child is attending school regularly, and in a timely manner. Parents/carers assume full responsibility for safe and reliable travel arrangements.

PTB can be used in various ways to suit individual family needs, including (but not exhaustive):

- Fuel costs for driving the child/young person to school
- Walking or cycling with the child
- Leasing a vehicle if one is not available
- Paying a trusted person (e.g. friend, relative, childminder) to accompany the child
- Shared travel arrangements with other families (e.g. car shares, joint taxi bookings)
- Purchasing travel passes for siblings to free up parental availability
- Paying for before/after school clubs for the child or siblings to support travel logistics
- Supporting travel on reduced timetables or flexible attendance plans

The Council aims to offer PTBs as a primary method of travel assistance where appropriate, as it often best meets the needs of families and promotes independence.

F) Provision of Vehicles: Provision of vehicle for transport will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, and only after all other suitable options have been explored and deemed unsuitable.

Where a vehicle is provided, vehicles and drivers are provided by a suitably qualified, registered, transport provider working to contractual standards set by the Council. All drivers will have an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate and operate in

accordance with the Council's contractual standards.

Wherever possible, children and young people who are awarded assistance in this way, will travel together in adapted minibuses designed to meet their specific needs. Routes will be planned to:

- Align with school start and finish times,
- Follow the shortest practical route for all passengers,
- Minimise travel time and disruption.

Under very exceptional circumstances the Council may transport pupils in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person. 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.

Communal pick up/drop off points will be considered for school children within a reasonable distance from their home address. This may or may not be accompanied. Where this option is considered for secondary school children, independent travel training may be required to support the child/young person travelling safely to the meeting point. A home pick up and drop off will only be made where it is deemed essential due to an individual's needs.

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

5.0 PART B: Travel Assistance to Access Education/Training for Young People Post 16

5.1 Introduction

Part B applies to young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties who are resident within Halton who are above statutory school age and aged over 16 but under 25.

The responsibility for facilitating access for 16-19 year olds (who have started a course before their 19th birthday) rests with local authorities. Local authorities are not required to provide free or subsidised travel assistance for young people aged 16–19. However, under Section 509AA and 509AB of the Education Act 1996, they must prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. This statement outlines the arrangements the authority considers necessary to facilitate access to education or training for students of sixth form age.

5.2 Legislation and Responsibilities

In accordance with the Raising the Participation Age (RPA) agenda, all young people born on or after 1 September 1997 must remain in education or training until their 18th birthday. The September Guarantee ensures that every young person aged 16 or 17 is

offered a suitable place in education or training.

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, Halton Borough Council may continue to maintain an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan for young people over the age of 19 where additional time is required to complete education or training, compared to peers without SEND. Special educational provision may continue until the end of the academic year in which the young person turns 25. The Council also has a duty under the Education and Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable, and assist the participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education and training up to the age of 25.

In line with the Preparation for Adulthood agenda and the SEND reforms of 2014, Halton Borough Council is committed to supporting young people and their families to work towards greater independence from the earliest opportunity. While most young people attending college are expected to travel independently, those who are unable to do so should be supported to develop these skills wherever possible.

5.3 Eligibility Criteria

Travel assistance may be provided for young people over 16 years with special educational needs who are attending a full-time course at the nearest provision to their home. Where a young person is not attending the provision nearest to their home address, travel assistance will not be provided.

Travel Assistance may be provided for young people Post-16 if they:

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

Travel assistance is not available for trips, work experience or any other activity associated with the school or college course.

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

5.4 Travel assistance

This section outlines the travel assistances which may be provided for young people who are 16 and over who have been assessed as requiring assistance with transport.

Where Halton Borough Council agrees to provide a travel assistance, pupils will be expected to travel by the most cost-effective means available: these being a travel pass or a Personal Travel Budget. The use of a contracted vehicle may be offered as a solution only where it is considered the most cost effective option as deemed by the Council.

Young people and/or their parents/carers must participate in the initial eligibility assessment, which considers individual and family circumstances. Supporting evidence may be required. The travel assistance will be person-centred, aiming to promote independence and confidence.

Applicants are expected to have explored all available travel concessions, bursaries, and benefits, including the use of Motability vehicles where applicable. If a Motability car is available, the council may consider the availability of such a vehicle when assessing whether travel assistance is necessary. Families may apply for a PTB to support this.

5.5 Types of Travel Assistance Provided

A) Travel Pass: A Travel Pass provides free access to public transport for eligible children and young people to travel between home and school during the academic year.

- Valid for school-related journeys on public transport.
- May be extended to a parent or travel buddy if accompaniment is necessary.
- Includes access to Independent Travel Training where applicable, to support safe and confident travel.

B) Independent Travel Training: Independent Travel Training empowers young people to travel safely and confidently on public transport. It focuses on developing personal, social, and life skills, enhancing road safety awareness, and promoting independence.

Key Benefits

- Builds confidence and independence.
- Develops personal safety and road safety skills.
- Enhances life skills such as:
 - Using money
 - Buying tickets
 - Planning journeys
 - Navigating buses and trains

Independent travel training may be considered for secondary school age children and young people. Independent Travel Training will be a part of planning for all children from Year 8 onwards as part of the child or young person's Education Health and Care Plan Annual Review.

An initial review of travel assistance applications will be undertaken to determine suitability. If appropriate, a qualified Travel Trainer conducts will conduct detailed assessment in collaboration with:

- The young person
- Parents/carers
- School staff
- Other professionals

Training Programme

- Tailored, one-to-one support using the Travel Training Toolkit.
- Criteria for successful completion are based on a comprehensive training plan.

- Final assessment shared with parents/carers.
- Completion is signed off by the Council and parents/carer.

Contact Information

For referrals, the Travel Training Toolkit, or more details: 0151 511 7444
Email: transportco-ordination@halton.gov.uk

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

E) Personal Travel Budget (PTB): The Council may provide parents/carers with an amount of money to enable them to provide personalised travel arrangements through a Personal Travel Budget (PTB). A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a financial allowance provided by the Council to parents/carers to arrange personalised travel assistances for their child or young person to attend school or college. Personal Travel Budgets offer families flexibility to choose how they facilitate travel to school or college, as long as the young person is attending school regularly and in a timely manner. Parents/carers assume full responsibility for safe and reliable travel arrangements.

PTB can be used in various ways to suit individual family needs, including:

- Fuel costs for driving the child/young person to school or college
- Walking or cycling with the child
- Leasing a vehicle if one is not available
- Paying a trusted person (e.g. friend, relative, childminder) to accompany the child
- Shared travel arrangements with other families (e.g. car shares, joint taxi bookings)
- Purchasing travel passes for siblings to free up parental availability
- Paying for before/after school clubs for the child or siblings to support travel logistics
- Supporting travel on reduced timetables or flexible attendance plans

Halton Borough Council aims to offer Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs) as the preferred method of travel assistance, where appropriate. PTBs often best meet the needs of families, promotes independence and supports flexible travel arrangements tailored to individual circumstances.

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

5.6 Other Transport Options Available

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

Concessionary Travel is offered to disabled people, whatever their age. Depending on individual circumstances this can be free or discounted travel on buses, and trains. More

information can be obtained from Transport Co-ordination on 0151 511 7444.

6.0 PART C: Application, Review and Appeals Processes

6.1 Formal Application for Assistance

The parent/carer or young person **must** make a formal application for travel assistance to access education before any assistance is considered. The Council may request the provision of written evidence from education specialists and/or medical experts.

It remains the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that their compulsory school aged child attends school regularly. In most cases, for those who qualify for assistance, travel assistance to access education will be co-ordinated by the Council's Transport Co-ordination Department.

6.2 Application Process

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

Stage 1 – Complete the Application (process currently under review)

Parent/carer/young person completes an Application Form. This application form and information form can be obtained on the Council website School Travel assistance page: <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/EducationandFamilies/Schools/SchoolTravel.aspx>

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

The completed form should be returned by email to SENAT@halton.gov.uk or hard copy to:

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

Stage 2 – Receipt of the Application

On receipt of the application an assessment of eligibility will be undertaken. At this stage the application will either progress to Stage 3 or be declined. The parent/carer/young person will receive a letter notifying them of the decision and the letter will outline the reasons for the decision.

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

Once the application has been approved a Council Officer may contact the parent/carer/young person to undertake an appropriate risk assessment. The Officer may also ask, where appropriate, the parent/carer and/or the child/young person to sign a Code of Conduct. The Transport Co-ordination Department reserves the right to withdraw the travel assistance if the child/young person or parent/carer refuses to sign the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct will be issued to parents/carers/students at the time of application.

6.3 Review Process

The travel assistance will be reviewed on an annual basis, through the Education Health and Care Plan Annual Review process in order to ensure the support offered continues to meet the needs of the child/young person. This will include a review of the child/young person's needs and the travel assistance.

At this stage alternative travel assistances may be discussed, including transition to Independent Travel Training from year 8 onwards. A Council Officer may also contact the parent/carer/young person to review the risk assessment and child/young person's information, if appropriate.

Where a review changes or removes eligibility of travel assistance, this will take effect from the beginning of the following term or time period determined at the Council's discretion.

6.4 Changes in Circumstances

It is the parent/carers/young person's responsibility to inform the Council of any changes in their circumstances. A change in circumstances in year can result in a change in eligibility.

Changes in circumstances include:

- A change in home address;
- Change to the statutory walking distance;
- A move from one school to another;
- A change in financial circumstances that means parents no longer qualify under low income;
- Change in the safety of the route;
- Transition from primary to secondary school and transition from secondary school to college;
- A change in medical and physical conditions;
- A move into Local Authority care.

Where the change in circumstances removes eligibility, the removal of travel assistance will take effect from the beginning of the following academic year.

6.5 Health and Safety

While every effort is made find a travel assistance that meet the needs of a child/young person, there will be circumstances when the travel assistance will need to be reviewed as it is not working. Whilst acknowledging the impact of their Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mobility difficulties on the behaviour of some children and young people, where a child/young person's conduct compromises the safety of anyone travelling with them, the Council reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the travel assistance.

There is an expectation that the parent/carer and/or the child/young person will sign a Code of Conduct. The Transport Co-ordination Department reserves the right to withdraw the offer of a travel assistance if the child/young person or parent/carer refuses to sign the

Code of Conduct. A travel assistance may be withdrawn if for example, but not limited to:

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

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

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

If an incident is serious enough to pose a risk to the safety of the child, other passengers, or staff, the Council may immediately withdraw the travel assistance to maintain its duty of care. Parents or carers will remain responsible for ensuring the child continues to attend school during this period.

7.0 Curriculum Travel During the School Day

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

8.0 Change of Address

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

9.0 Temporary Relocation

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

10.0 Shared Care Arrangements

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

11.0 Safeguarding

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

12.0 Appeals Process

Initial Decision

An initial decision on eligibility for travel assistance will be made by Officer A. The decision may include:

- Refusal of travel assistance; or
- An offer of travel arrangements that the parent/carer considers unsuitable.

Stage 1 Appeal – Review by Senior Officer

Parents/carers may challenge Officer A's decision within 20 working days of notification.

Grounds for challenge may include:

- Eligibility criteria (e.g., distance, route safety, disability or mobility difficulties).

A Senior Officer (Officer B) will review the case and provide a written response within 20 working days, including:

- Detailed reasoning for the decision; and
- Information on how to escalate to Stage 2.

Stage 2 Appeal – Independent Appeal Panel

If dissatisfied, parents/carers may request a Stage 2 appeal within 20 working days of the Stage 1 outcome by writing to Democratic Services (contact details provided in Stage 1 response).

Democratic Services will arrange an Independent Appeal Panel within 40 working days.

The panel will:

- Be independent of previous decisions, but need not be independent of the local authority
- Consider written and verbal representations from the parent/carer.
- Use their discretionary power to decide whether to award:
 - Full assistance;
 - Part-paid assistance (with parental contribution); or
 - No assistance.

A written decision will be sent within 5 working days, including details on how to escalate to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

If parents/carers remain dissatisfied, they may complain to the **LGO** where there is evidence of:

- Failure to follow procedural rules; or Maladministration of the policy.

Contact details for doing this are included in Stage 2 response.