

Post 16 SEN Home to School/College Transport Assistance **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

These FAQs should be read alongside the published policy available [here](#)

- **What is changing?**

Leicestershire County Council is continuing to face significant financial challenges with budget plans recently announced to save another £50m across all areas of the council. This means difficult decisions about services in all areas of the council's work.

The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide home to school/college transport free of charge to students aged 16 to 19 in the same way it does for children aged 5-16 years. Students currently pay £660 per year to access transport to post 16 education but low income families are currently exempt from this charge. Some forms of transport provided, e.g. taxi and minibus provision cost the council much more than the contribution made by families.

Following a full public consultation during the autumn term 2017, the Council's Cabinet agreed on 9th March 2018 to change the School Transport policy for pupils as listed below. The changes will take effect **from September 2019**, irrespective of the transport and/or charges that may have applied to students up to that point i.e. there will be no transitional arrangements. This means, for example, that you may have to pay charges **from September 2019** where you currently receive free transport and/or your child will no longer receive taxi or council minibus transport. The full changes to the SEN transport policy are:

- For all eligible SEN children **aged between 16 and 18 years**: stopping traditional transport methods (taxis or Council fleet minibuses) and replacing them with a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) direct payment (although there may be some exceptions to this that would be considered on a case by case basis). The rules for students aged 19-25 years are different so transport has to be free of charge when deemed necessary by the Council, but a PTB will still remain the standard offer for those students.
- For low income families using SEN transport for those **aged between 16 and 18 years**: we will charge an annual contribution of £330 (currently free). This is 50% of the full charge payable by non-low income families. As above there is no charge for eligible students aged 19-25 years.
- For low income families using **nursery** transport: we will charge an annual contribution of £330 (currently free). This is 50% of the full charge for non-low income families and may change based on budget updates in future.

Full details of the consultation and Cabinet decision (including changes to the Mainstream Home to School Transport policy) can be found by clicking [here](#).

- **Will my child still be eligible for support?**

The policy changes the type of support young people may receive. It does not change the eligibility criteria. When a young person enters Post 16 education they are assessed annually to determine their ongoing eligibility and the suitability of their transport arrangements.

- **Will this affect my child's education options/choice?**

Young people will still be able to choose the school/college course that meets their needs and aspirations, as agreed with the Council's Special Educational Needs and Assessment Service (SENA); but note that the Council will only fund transport assistance to the nearest school/college that meets the student's needs subject to eligibility criteria in the transport policy. Families should consider this now when evaluating options for their child's Post 16 education.

- **My child is currently in Post 16 education or is starting in September 2018. How will this affect him/her?**

The Council's new policy will affect all students at the same time i.e. **from September 2019**. This means that if your child currently has a place on a Council minibus or a private taxi, or is allocated one for the current 2018-19 academic year; this will end in July 2019 and will be replaced with a PTB in September 2019 and future years.

- **My child with SEN is entering Post 16 education on or after September 2019. How will this affect him/her?**

If eligible for transport assistance, your child will receive assistance under the new SEN transport policy. As part of a young person's EHCP review, we will usually discuss Post 16 choices between years 9-11. An SEN assessment officer will speak to you as part of this process – including the location of any schools/colleges you may be considering and how you will be able to access those using a PTB.

- **If I have two or more children with SEN, all of whom are eligible for transport assistance, can I claim a PTB for each child?**

You can claim for each child. The first child in the household will receive 100% of the PTB, the PTB offer to any additional children will be at the discretion of the Council, but will be at a reduced amount.

- **Where can I find out more information on how PTBs work and how much money will I be entitled to?**

To find out how PTBs work, how payments are calculated, indicative amounts and the range of options open to you click [here](#). The application form for assistance will also give you an indicative figure for the PTB to help you make your own arrangements.

- **When will I know what my PTB offer is?**

The Council will contact families of those aged 15+ years in October/November 2018 with an early indication of what transport assistance their child is likely to be given should they start/continue with Post 16 education from September 2019. If a PTB is to be offered an indicative value will also be provided at the same time.

Families will still have to make a formal application for transport assistance (whether that is for a PTB or traditional transport) and a fresh transport application is still required for every year that your child is in Post 16 education. For the 2019-2020 academic year we aim to have application forms available online from early in 2019, with a closing date of the end of February 2019. We will then check your child's eligibility and aim to inform you as soon as possible after that, but all of the final transport offers will be made by June 2019 (but remember that the usual offer will be only for a PTB).

As not all parents will be aware of the future education plans for their child by the end of February the Council will accept later applications, but in all cases we would expect those parents to have applied by the end of June 2019. The Council will then give a decision as soon as possible after that.

As the transport charge still applies to 16-18 year olds, low income families will have a £330 deduction made from their PTB offer whilst other families will have the full charge of £660 deducted.

The minimum PTB offer any family will get is £150 per annum (this will be for eligible children living very close to their school).

- **What if I disagree with the provision of a PTB and still want to use a Council minibus or have a taxi?**

The offer and type of Post 16 transport remains at the discretion of the Council, but we will take into consideration individual circumstances and the needs of your child (including a consideration of your application form, the EHCP and any current transport risk assessment that the Council has undertaken). Bearing in mind that the Council is aware that all of the children that are affected by these changes have varying degrees of SEN, some examples that the Council would **not** ordinarily see as exceptional (in their own right) are:

- Single parent families
- Parent(s) that work – see below for further information on this
- Having other children to look after and/or at other schools
- Living in a rural area with or without access to public transport
- Parents/students unable to drive or having access to a car
- Students in wheelchairs

It will be for parents to demonstrate why they believe that council-provided transport is the only viable option for their child – the Council will consider any exceptional circumstances advised for individuals on a case by case basis.

You can't use your PTB to buy back transport services through the Council, as the Council plans to maximise the usage of seats on taxis and fleet buses to those students that it must provide those services to.

You can only query your transport offer once you have been officially notified of this (which won't be until after Easter **2019**). If you still believe that the Council has not applied its policy correctly, then there is a separate appeals procedure. You **cannot** appeal against the provision of a PTB just because you disagree with the policy.

- **What if I feel that my PTB does not cover the costs of getting my child to school/college?**

We expect that in the vast majority of cases the PTB will cover your costs and remember that it can be used in a number of other ways, not just to drive your child directly e.g. paying someone else to take your child, paying for childcare for other children while you take your child to school/college, 'pooling' of PTBs with other parents to car share. Some students may also be eligible for a government bursary to 'top-up' the PTB (see below). Ultimately, as Post 16 transport is discretionary it is recognised that a small number of parents may also need to 'top-up' the PTB themselves if they are not transporting their own child or sharing transport.

- **My child also has transport to short-breaks/respite to and from school provided by the Council – will this be replaced with a PTB?**

No, children who have transport to/from these venues have been given this after a Social Care assessment so this transport can continue. Any PTB payment made for home to school transport will be reduced by the number of journeys that the council provides for this transport.

- **What if my child is at a residential placement?**

The same rules above apply i.e. the standard provision for Post 16 students will be a PTB only.

- **What other support is available to me?**

There are a number of other things that can support families with getting their child to and from school/college as follows:

- Bursary funds: Schools, colleges and training providers have funds to help students studying a full-time course and who think they might struggle with

the costs for their studies (including for transport). For advice speak to your school/college's student support services or course tutors.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 Bursaries:

1. Vulnerable student bursary: you could get a bursary worth up to £1,200, depending on your circumstances and benefits.
2. Discretionary bursary: you could get a discretionary bursary if you need financial help but don't qualify for a vulnerable student bursary. Your education or training provider decides how much you get and what it's used for.

Bursaries can also be used to pay the £330 charge that will be made to low-income families who will exceptionally remain on traditional transport from September 2019.

More information on bursaries can be found by clicking [here](#).

- In households where there is a child with higher needs there is an entitlement to mobility allowances, with the Higher Rate Mobility Component currently amounting to approximately £3,016 per year, which can be exchanged for a Motability vehicle.

The Motability Scheme supports families with the purchase of vehicles, including:

- Liaising with dealers to arrange payments directly from DWP
 - Provision of vehicles including all breakdown, servicing and insurance included in the price
 - Assisting with securing adapted and wheelchair accessible vehicles
 - The possibility of grants for adapting vehicles, driving lessons, etc., depending on family/individual circumstances.
- Concessionary travel passes for disabled people: through the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. This offers free off-peak bus travel in Leicestershire, Leicester and throughout England.

Details of the scheme and how to apply can be found by clicking [here](#).

- Taxis: some parents are concerned that taxis and private hire vehicles may charge more to carry wheelchair users, which would be a barrier to independence. With effect from 6th April 2017, taxi and private hire vehicle drivers with accessible vehicles are obliged by law to:
 - Transport wheelchair users in their wheelchair
 - Provide passengers in wheelchairs with appropriate assistance
 - Charge wheelchair users the same as non-wheelchair users.

- Flexible working to allow parents time to transport their child to school/college or to facilitate this in other ways: the Work and Families Act 2006 gives employees the right to request hours of work that fit around their caring responsibilities and for their request to be taken seriously by their employer. You must have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks to make a formal request. If you haven't worked for your employer for 26 weeks and you need to change your hours of work then you can still talk to your employer about this.

Once your child reaches the age of 18, you still have the right to request flexible working. More information about your rights to flexible working can be found by clicking [here](#).

Contact details for further information

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