

Thurrock Council

Travel Assistance Budget

A guide for parents and carers.

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1. What is a Travel Assistance Budget (TAB)?

A Travel Assistance Budget (TAB) is a payment designed to help you make arrangements which will enable you to facilitate your child accessing school.

You can use the budget in any way you wish, to ensure your child attends school every day. For example, it can help towards covering the costs of running a family car or arranging with another member of the family or friends to assist with childcare, enabling you to make the journey. The payment can also be put to use by arranging childcare for a younger sibling whilst the older sibling is taken to school in the family car.

The payment is a fixed amount based on mileage from your home address to the school your child attends. It also provides parents with a regular link to their child's school and allows for more frequent opportunities to discuss their child's progress.

2. Who can be considered for a TAB?

A TAB is available to children who have been assessed as eligible to receive home to school transport. The TAB is granted at the discretion of the local authority and is not automatically given upon request.

Parent/carers seeking to access the TAB must be found to be eligible for transport assistance before being considered for a TAB. Information on eligibility for Home to School Transport is available at www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-eligible

3. How do I apply?

You can apply for a TAB by completing the online home to school transport application form.

You can indicate your preference for a TAB by ticking the relevant box on your home to school transport application, which can be found at www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/apply-for-support

You will be responsible for organising alternative transport arrangements while your assessment is completed.

4. How much would I expect to receive?

The amount of money that is awarded is based on the distance between your home and the school your child attends. Many available maps and internet-based measuring tools will give you an indication of the distance from your home to your child's school, but this is only an indication.

The distance measured is based on a walking distance. Thurrock Council's own measuring software is used to determine this. For fairness and consistency, the same software is used for all applications.

Payments are paid at 45 pence per mile for 2 return journeys – 4 trips per day.

For example:

- 5 miles x 4 trips at 45 pence per mile = £9 per day
- 10 miles x 4 trips at 45 pence per mile = £18 per day
- 15 miles x 4 trips at 45 pence per mile = £27 per day

TAB payments are made based on your child attending school for a full term. Our Children's Transport team will send you a schedule each term that will detail what your expected monthly payments will be, based on 100% attendance.

TAB payments will not be made for days where your child absent due to sickness. A monthly attendance record – which has been signed and stamped by the school your child attends, to ensure your child is regularly accessing school – will need to be submitted to Children's Transport by email at childrenstransport@thurrock.gov.uk

Should your child be absent from school, even if this is through no fault of their own, your following month's payment will be reduced to account for the reduction in required travel. You will be notified of the reduction that will be made in the following term's payment before the payment is due to be paid. If your child's attendance at school is not sufficient to continue paying you a TAB it may be withdrawn.

5. Will the payments be taxed or have an impact on other benefits?

No. The payments are not taxed and will not impact on other benefits that you may receive. This is because the TAB is a payment made in relation to the child not the parent.

6. Will the council arrange short term transport cover for the occasions that I am unable to transport my child to school – for example, if I am unwell?

No, the council will not provide any transport arrangements and it will be parental responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school.

You are advised to have a contingency plan in place using your TAB if for any reason you are unable to get your child to school yourself or by your chosen method.

7. Will I receive the TAB until my child finishes at the school they attend?

Once a TAB has been granted, you are not guaranteed to receive it until your child leaves their current school. Our Children's Transport team will review your child's TAB at least once a year. The review will evaluate whether it remains cost effective for the TAB to be provided and new transport options may mean this is no longer the case.

8. What should I do if my circumstances change?

If your child moves home or changes school, you must let our Children's Transport team know as soon as possible, but no later than 28 days before the change is due to take place.

Failure to notify our Children's Transport team of such changes under the terms of the agreement would constitute fraud and could lead to legal proceedings at a later date to recover any undue payments.

On notification of a change in circumstances your child's eligibility to receive a TAB would then be reassessed. You are not guaranteed to continue to receive a TAB because one was previously provided. The TAB assessment will be made on the basis of your child's current circumstances and what alternative transport is available at the time.

Any transport arrangements that are required after the change but before your child has been reassessed will be the parent's responsibility to arrange.

Where payments are made and it is later established that the local authority had not been informed of a change in circumstance, payments will be recovered by the local authority's Debt Recovery team and where appropriate, through the courts.

9. Would I receive a TAB for my child to attend two schools?

No. Transport assistance is only provided to one educational establishment. If you apply for a TAB, this will only be assessed to the main school that the child is on roll at.

10. How and when would I be paid my TAB?

TAB payments are made termly. Payments are paid directly into your bank account before the start of the new term.

Payments will be calculated 10 working days from when your home to school transport application was assessed as eligible. Payments are not backdated.

11. Can I appeal if my TAB request is refused?

No. As the TAB is only available to children that are eligible for free school transport, there is no appeal as eligibility is not in dispute. However, you can have the decision reviewed.

A TAB cannot be provided until we establish whether or not your child is eligible for free school transport.

When applying for free school transport, parents are advised to provide whatever information they feel is the best evidence of their child's particular need. This may be their child's Education Health and Care plan, a report from their child's consultant or GP that references how their needs impact their ability to travel to school or any other information that the parent thinks would assist in providing the most appropriate transport arrangements for their child.

The Transport Eligibility Officer will use this information to assess your child's eligibility for free school transport and decide the most appropriate form of transport. Our Children's Transport team will then use the cost of this transport to assess whether a TAB can be provided.

If you are refused a TAB because the cost of the TAB is more than the cost to the local authority of transporting your child, you can ask for a review of the decision by a different Transport Eligibility Officer. Requests should be made by emailing childrenstransport@thurrock.gov.uk

This review will establish whether the most appropriate form of transport has been offered to your child, based on the evidence you provided, when deciding whether a TAB would be cost effective.

If you are refused any assistance with transport because your child does not meet the necessary criteria, normal transport appeal arrangements will apply. These appeal processes are separate to any request for a TAB. Parents are responsible for any alternative transport arrangements that are required during this time.