

Thurrock Council

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

2023-2024

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement – Academic Year 2023 to 2024

Transport policy statement for:

- young people aged 16 to 18 in further education
- continuing learners aged 19
- young people aged 19 to 25 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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Document first release: 31 May 2019

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Introduction

Local authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised post-16 travel support but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

'Sixth form age' refers to those young people who are over 16 years of age but under 19 or continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday (years 12, 13 and 14).

Local authorities also have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people with learning difficulties / disabilities to participate in education and training, up to the age of 25.

This policy uses the term 'Post-16' to include both learners of sixth form age and those with learning difficulties / disabilities up to the age of 25.

This policy document specifies the support that Thurrock Council (the council) considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post-16 learners receiving education or training.

Education or training refers to learning or training at a school, further education institution, a council maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education, an establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency, learning providers delivering accredited programmes of learning which lead to positive outcomes and are funded by the council, for example, colleges, charities and private learning providers.

Aims and objectives

The council has the following aims and objectives when assessing transport / travel support:

- **people** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
- **place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
- **prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

Local authority transport support

Support for learners with special educational needs or a disability (SEND), aged 16 to 25

In some cases, the council may offer assistance to students of sixth form age with SEND, with or without an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, to ensure that they can access education or training, or to adult learners who are over 19 and under 25 with SEND.

These awards are made on a discretionary basis. Each case is decided on its merits, taking into consideration:

- walking distance
- the impact a learning difficulty or disability may have on a young person's ability to walk the required distance
- the nature or the route and any alternative that a young person might be expected to take

We will also look into the following issues when considering the application for travel assistance:

- journey times
- the suitability of the journey
- best practice for reasonable travel times (in most cases, no more than 75 minutes)
- the financial position of the applicant and their family
- the cost to the council, if appropriate
- sustainability
- safety
- whether there is a nearer suitable course
- whether the student had begun a particular course at the establishment before attaining the age of 19 and continues to attend that course
- choices made for reasons of religion or belief
- other sources of help available, such as the bursary fund

We do not make travel awards where another source of funding is available to the applicant, or where a similar available course/training is nearer.

Residence

All applicants must live within Thurrock. Where a young person lives between two addresses, the council will use the address at which child benefit – where paid – is awarded. Where no child benefit is paid, the council will use the address for benefits paid to the young person themselves, or other evidence it considers relevant.

Requirement to attend the nearest educational establishment

The council will only offer post-16 transport support where the student attends the nearest suitable school or college, recommended by the local authority, that offers the course they may wish to study. The school or college must be over 3 miles from their home address.

The council uses a specialist computer programme called Datamap to measure distances between home and school or college. This gives accurate walking distances. We do not consider distances measured in any other way.

Datamap is available online at <https://hometoschool.thurrock.gov.uk/>

Important

In most cases, there will be a charge for travel assistance we provide. We may require a contribution towards the cost, or the full cost to the council. Students and parents are advised to investigate all sources of alternative help as well as local travel options before applying to the council for assistance.

In all cases where assistance is sought from the council, students and parents will have to show that they have exhausted all other options before applying. Alternative methods of travel may be cheaper than the rates charged by the council.

Details of how and when to apply for travel support are provided below. You must reapply annually or before the expiry of any award made if you are continuing your studies and wish to be considered for further help.

We may offer travel support to and from your post-16 setting in exceptional circumstances. For information on discretionary awards, go to:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/discretionary-transport-award

Refund of travel expenses

If a parent has paid for transport and this is no longer required part way through a term, a partial refund of the charge may be provided. Any repayment is paid pro rata according to the number of school days a pupil travelled and the number of days remaining in the term.

Transport to residential settings

For those in a residential setting, named in the EHC plan, a maximum of 12 journeys to and from residential placements may be offered. Journeys to non-residential college provision will also be considered as part of the needs assessment.

If a parent / carer wishes to accompany their child to their residential educational facility this will be done at their own expense. If the parent/carers is in receipt of benefits or earning a low income or has other exceptional needs, such as a disability, they complete a discretionary awards application, requesting support with travel expenses.

To access the discretionary awards application for, go to:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/discretionary-transport-award

If additional journeys are required, a discretionary award application must be completed. It is the expectation that the Independent Travel training programme will be offered to all post-16 students with SEND. In all other cases, Independent Travel training may be offered as an alternative to, or in conjunction with, an offer of transport.

Local authority support for young people without special educational needs or disability

The council assists young people without special educational needs by providing information. Except in exceptional circumstances, the council does not provide travel assistance. In cases

considered exceptional, an annual contribution towards the cost of the transport will be required to cover the cost incurred by the council in making the arrangements.

Additional transport and travel support information

Concessionary tickets for young people aged 16 to 25 from public transport providers

Ticket schemes are available from public transport providers within Thurrock.

For more information regarding bus operators in Thurrock, go to:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/bus-operators

For more information regarding c2c train services, go to:

www.c2c-online.co.uk

For train services across England, go to National Rail Enquires at:

www.nationalrail.co.uk/tickets-railcards-and-offers

Travel support from schools and colleges

Some further education colleges within Thurrock have their own travel schemes and parents and students are strongly advised to contact their preferred college to find out more.

Information regarding the colleges available within Thurrock can be found using the link below.

www.thurrock.gov.uk/colleges

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation so that they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

1. a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups below:
 - in care
 - care leavers
 - in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right
 - in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right
 - discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment

2. discretionary bursaries that institutions award to meet individual needs – for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment – to be eligible for the discretionary bursary young people must either:
 - be aged 16 or over but under 19 on **31 August 2023**
 - be aged 19 or over on **31 August 2023** and have an EHC plan
 - be aged 19 or over on **31 August 2023** and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
 - be studying a programme that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality, such as Ofsted – the provision must also be funded by either a government funding agency or the local authority

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing both types of bursary. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen school or college to make an application.

Further information can be found at:

- www.gov.uk – search for post-16 bursaries
- www.gov.uk/subsidised-college-transport-16-19

Young parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while you are learning.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- childcare, including deposit and registration fees
- a childcare 'taster' session (up to 5 days)
- keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays
- taking your child to the childcare provider

Types of childcare

The childcare provider must be Ofsted registered and can be a:

- childminder
- pre-school playgroup
- day nursery
- before or after school club established to offer childcare

If your child needs specialist childcare, the provider must also be on the Care Quality Commission's register for specialist provision.

If you want a relative to get Care to Learn for looking after your child, they need to be both:

- providing registered childcare for children they are not related to
- living apart from you and your child

Payments

Childcare payments go directly to your childcare provider. Before your childcare provider can be paid:

- your childcare provider needs to confirm your child's attendance
- your school or college needs to confirm that you are attending your course

Payments for travel costs go to your school or college. Your college will either pay you or arrange travel for you.

Attendance

Payments will stop if:

- you stop attending your course
- you finish your course
- your child stops attending childcare

Eligibility

You can get Care to Learn if:

- you're a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you're the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you're either a British citizen or have a legal right to live and study in England
- your course is publicly-funded – check with your school or college
- your childcare provider is registered with Ofsted or the Care Quality Commission

Type of course

Care to Learn is only available for courses in England that have some public funding.

This includes courses that take place in:

- schools
- school sixth forms
- sixth form colleges
- other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning
- your community at Brighter Futures family hubs

Young parents are also entitled to apply for an Under-19 Bus Only Ticket or for those aged 19 and over can apply for the 19 to 25 card.

For more information, go to www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/applying-for-care-to-learn

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

The council may offer to assist a young person of 16 or 17 who is vulnerable to becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET), or who has already become NEET, if it considers this necessary to support their participation in education, training or employment. Young people who

are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET will be given considerations similar to those listed above under the heading 'Learners with special educational needs or a disability'.

Apprenticeships

Our Thurrock Careers team produces a weekly 'Opportunity Bulletin' email. It contains details of apprenticeships, employment, training and volunteering opportunities. You can sign-up to receive a new edition of the bulletin each week by entering your email address on the website below:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/email

Once you are on the site, select 'Thurrock Careers' as your subscription topic preference.

Additional transport and travel support information relating to students with SEND

SEND Local Offer

The SEND Local Offer gives children and young people in the borough, who have special educational needs and/or a disability, information in one place. The Thurrock SEND Local Offer aims to provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information about what services and provisions are available in Thurrock for parents and young people.

For more information, go to:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/localoffer

Independent Travel training

Independent Travel training is a great way to help young people with special educational needs and disabilities to travel to and from their place of education.

With travel training, young people are able to gain skills and confidence to make journeys safely and independently.

The training is personalised to meet the needs of each young person. It includes:

- planning a journey
- road safety
- general life skills

We are offering Independent Travel training for young people with special educational needs and disabilities attending a post-16 setting. The start date for sessions for the **September 2023/24** academic year will be posted online on or before **30 June 2023**.

Local authority support in other circumstances

Discretionary awards

An application for travel assistance for a pupil who does not meet the criteria for any category of award described in this policy may be considered for an award paid in full, or in part, and requiring a contribution, as an exception. These are made in exceptional circumstances only.

Applications should be made as soon as possible on the relevant form and cannot be backdated. Applicants must provide all evidence listed or requested by the council.

Where a form is incomplete and/or evidence is not provided as requested within any given time limit, no award can be made.

To access the application form for discretionary awards, go to:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/discretionary-transport-award

How to make an application and the timeframes involved

It is important to plan your journey to find the best travel options available to you. If the best option is to apply for travel assistance, you will need to complete a post-16 SEND transport application before **30 June 2023** for the following academic year, which starts **1 September 2023**.

If you apply after this date, we may be able to arrange travel assistance but cannot guarantee it will be available at the start of the academic year.

Applications can be made online at:

www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/support-for-learners-over-16-years-old

Appeals

The council has adopted the appeal procedure recommended within the Department for Education's Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance.

This procedure applies to all applications. Parents/carers may complain/appeal if they:

- believe a mistake has been made in the consideration of their child's transport entitlement
- are dissatisfied with the service they have received or the way in which they have been treated
- are of the view that their child's circumstances are not covered by the policy and that there are exceptional circumstances that should be taken into account – in such circumstances, their case would be considered within the appeal process and as an exception, under the discretionary awards process

In the first instance, parents / carers should contact the council's Complaints Team at 0800 021 3016 or complaints@thurrock.gov.uk

Correspondence will be dealt with in accordance with the general complaints process set out at www.thurrock.gov.uk/complaints

Annex 1 – Glossary

In this policy, the term:

- **"home"** of a child is the place where he or she is habitually and normally resident
- **"nearest suitable school"** means the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have
- **"parent"** is equated to mean parent or carer or legal guardian
- **"philosophical belief"**, to be worthy of protection, must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance, be worthy of respect in a democratic society, and not be incompatible with human dignity or the fundamental rights of the child – examples of beliefs are humanism and atheism
- **"road routes"** means routes passable by a motor vehicle, and could include distance covered on additional transport – for example, via ferry

Annex 2 – Flowchart of the review and appeals process

Home to School Travel and Transport Review and Appeals Process:

- clear and transparent
- published annually on website
- details safe route assessment and review/appeal process



Officer A declines the application or offers travel arrangements the parent considers 'unsuitable'



Parent challenges (within 20 working days)

Parent challenges officer A's decision on basis of:

- entitlement
- distance measurement
- route safety
- consideration of exceptional circumstances



Stage 1 (within 20 working days) review by a senior officer

Officer B (a Senior Officer) reviews Officer A's decision and sends the parent a written notification of the outcome including:

- detailed reasoning for decision made
- notification of option to escalate to Stage 2 (an appeal panel)



Parent challenges (within 20 working days)

Parent challenges officer B's (the senior officer) decision



Stage 2 (within 40 working days) review by an Appeal Panel

- independent panel (Officer A or B must not sit on panel) hears written/verbal representation from parent
- the appeal panel is independent of the process to date and suitably qualified



Independent panel sends decision letter to parent (within 5 working days) including how to escalate the case to the Social Care and Local Government Ombudsman (SCLGO)