

Thurrock Council

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

2024-2025

Transport policy statement for young people aged 16 to 18 in further education, continuing learners aged 19 and those young people aged 19 to 24 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Version control

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1. 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.

Department for Education Post 16 statutory guidance can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training

1.1. 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.

2. Local authority transport support

2.1. 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.

2.2. 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.

2.3. 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 www.thurrock.gov.uk/datamap

2.4. Important

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

3. Financial contribution towards transport costs

For all young people with SEN who meet the eligibility criteria with or without an Education, Health Care Plan following formal consultation and Cabinet approval in March 2024, families will be required to contribute towards the cost of transport per young person from 1st June 2024 for transport starting September 2024-25.

A weekly contribution of £23.69 is required towards the cost of transport from the student/parent, this equates to £900 per year. This is reduced to £11.85 per week for low-income families or £450 per year. This contribution is in line with Essex County Council contribution rates. The option will be available to pay your contribution on a monthly (over 11 months), termly, or annual basis over the academic year.

If you choose to receive a travel assistance budget, your contribution will be deducted from your travel assistance payment on a termly basis.

A low-income family is one where a child receives free school meals because of the family's income, or their parents or carers receive any of the benefits listed below:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit – and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190
- Universal Credit with an annual earned income of £7,400 or less
- the guaranteed element of Pension Credit
- support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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/carer 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 form, go to www.thurrock.gov.uk/home-to-school-or-college-travel-support/apply-for-support

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.

3.3. 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.

4. Additional transport and travel support information

4.1. 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

4.2. 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 at www.thurrock.gov.uk/colleges

4.3. 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 2024**
 - be aged 19 or over on **31 August 2024** and have an EHC plan
 - be aged 19 or over on **31 August 2024** 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 bursaries. 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

4.4. 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 £180 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

4.5. 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

4.6. 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.

4.7. Attendance

Payments will stop if:

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

4.8. 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

4.9. 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

4.10. 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'.

4.11. Apprenticeships/internships

For information regarding apprenticeships and internship opportunities please visit Thurrock Opportunities at www.thurrockopportunities.co.uk/send

5. Additional transport and travel support information relating to students with SEND

5.1. 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

5.2. 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 can gain skills and confidence to make journeys safely and independently.

A new travel training programme for 2024-2025 is being developed. The training will be personalised to meet the needs of each young person. It will include:

- planning a journey
- road safety
- general life skills

Where a SEND post-16 student is attending the school named within their EHC plan as the nearest appropriate school for their post-16 education, where possible public transport will be promoted for this group and travel training referrals will be made for all students with the expectation they will be assessed for suitability for training by the end of the first term of post-16 education.

5.3. Travel Assistance Budget (TAB)

A Travel Assistance Budget (TAB) is a payment for you to spend on your child's travel to school. It enables you as a family to have choice and control over your child's journey to school.

You can spend this payment as needed to ensure your child travels to school in the best possible way that meets your needs as a family.

The travel assistance budget can be used in the following ways:

- facilitate costs of running the family car
- arrange for family or friends to assist with the home to school travel
- facilitate childcare payments for other siblings during transport period
- pay for someone to walk a parents/carers other child to school
- spend on taxi fares or public transport costs
- pay for anything else that works for the parent/carer's family

How it works

How much money you get is worked out based on the two return journeys to and from school at the beginning and end of the day and your contribution towards transport.

Your contribution towards transport will be deducted from your travel assistance budget before it is paid to you.

Example

Home to school = 10 miles each way.

Rate of TAB – 45p per mile.

Paid for 2 return journeys.

10 miles x 4 = 40 miles.

x 45p = £18 per day.

£18 x 190 school days = £3,420.

Paid over 10 months = £342 per month.

The amount paid to you will be less than the total amount stated above as your contribution towards transport will be deducted.

5.4. Fuel allowance

The council can provide a fuel allowance for parents to take their person to and from college, where the parent/carer would like this option and it is more cost effective than providing a seat on a contracted vehicle or public transport.

The council would pay parents two return journeys per day at 45p per mile. This is calculated the same as a travel budget but is paid in arrears on receipt of a completed 'student travel expenses/attendance form' signed by the school. Attendance records will then be checked before payment is made.

6. Local authority support in other circumstances

6.1. 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

6.2. 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 2024 for the following academic year, which starts 1 September 2024.

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/apply-for-support

7. Appeals procedure

The Children's Transport team in the council's Education department will provide in writing the reasons for the refusal of an application at the point of assessment.

Appeals against a refusal of assistance or the suitability of the transport provided should be made by completing the online appeal form on our website at www.thurrock.gov.uk/hometoschoolappeal

Each appeal is considered on an individual basis and does not set a standard practice for future cases. The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

Appeals will be considered in a 2-part process:

Stage 1 – consideration will be made by an officer more senior than the previous decision maker.

Stage 2 – a full and final decision will be made by an independent appeal panel that were not part of any previous decisions made. The parent will be invited to the meeting to explain their case, which will be held in person at the Civic Offices in Grays.

If the parent/carer feels we have failed to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way an appeal was handled, the parent/carer has the right to refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or request a judicial review if the parent/carer believes the decision to refuse travel is flawed on public law grounds.

The flowchart within appendix 2 of this policy provides further information on the process and timelines.

All information on appeals is on our website at www.thurrock.gov.uk/hometoschoolappeal

8. Complaints

Complaints about the service provided by us relating to Home to School Travel arrangements can be made by using our complaints procedure. This is available at www.thurrock.gov.uk/complaints

Our complaints process has two stages. The parent or carer can make a complaint by email or in writing:

- email – complaints@thurrock.gov.uk
- address – Complaints, Thurrock Council, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, RM17 6SL

Appendix 1 – Glossary

Legal references and definitions

Words used in this policy are taken from the Education Act 1996 which defines them as follows.

Section 444(5) of the Act defines the statutory walking distances.

Schedule 35B of the Act defines:

1. 'Eligible children'– paragraphs 2-7 and 9-13
2. 'Qualifying school'– paragraph 15
3. 'Disabled child'– paragraph 15(4)
4. 'Religion and belief'– paragraph 15(6) and 509AD of the Act
5. 'Low-income family'– paragraphs 9-14

Section 579 of the Act defines 'child'.

Section 509AC of the Act defines 'compulsory school age'.

The Equality Act 2010 defines 'religion or belief' for the purposes of this Act.

The Children's and Families Act section 10 defines 'SEN'.

Additional definitions

Term	Definition
Compulsory school age	Between the ages of 5 and 16 years old "beginning at the start of the term following a child's fifth birthday" and "ending the last Friday in June of the school year in which they are 16".
Home	A child's home is the place where they are habitually and normally resident. Where a child lives between the homes of two parents, we take the address of the parent who receives child benefit. If there is doubt about the address where the child lives, we will decide.
Philosophical belief	We adopt the interpretation of the Department for Education. For a philosophical "belief" to be worthy of protection, it must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion, and importance• be worthy of respect in a democratic society• not be incompatible with human dignity or the fundamental rights of the child Examples of beliefs are humanism and atheism.
Road routes	Reference to road route should be taken to mean a route passable by a motor vehicle and could include distance covered on additional transport – for example, via ferry.

Appendix 2 – The appeals process

The flowchart below sets out the full review and appeals process.

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



Within **20 working days** of receiving Officer A's decision, the parent submits their written appeal.



Stage 1: review by a senior officer (Officer B)

Within **20 working days** of receiving the parent's request, Officer B (a senior officer) reviews Officer A's decision and notifies the parent in writing of the outcome. Officer B has not been party to Officer A's decision.



20 working days after receiving Officer B's decision, the parent submits written notification that they wish to escalate the matter to Stage 2.



Stage 2: review by Independent Appeal Panel

Within **40 days** of receiving the parent's request, an independent appeal panel considers written / oral representations from the parent, Officer A and Officer B, and reaches a final decision.



Within **5 working days** the parent will be provided with a written outcome of the Stage 2 Appeal. This will be sent by email.



The parent may make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if they feel the local authority has made a mistake in the way it has handled their case. Alternatively, they may request a judicial review if they believe the decision to refuse travel is flawed on the grounds of public law.