

Post 16 Discretionary Transport Policy Consultation

Introduction

Ealing Council is consulting on our Post 16 Discretionary Transport Policy. This is something all councils are required to do periodically, and we think that there are opportunities through this review to improve outcomes for children and young people in Ealing, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Ealing Council wants to make sure we continue to deliver effective travel assistance for young people with SEND in school year 12 and above, enabling them to access further education or training. We acknowledge that without this service some young people with SEND, or those whose family circumstances mean that additional support to access education will be required, would be unable to access specialist provision or colleges, especially those who have significant additional needs. However, our analysis and comparisons with other local authorities nationally indicate that the current Ealing policy requires further amendment to:

- provide post 16 travel assistance in a more effective and efficient manner,
- support children and young people to be better prepared for adulthood, and
- maximise the use of public resources

As a result of our review, we are proposing a more detailed policy that takes into account the individual needs of young people and provides more flexibility in how travel assistance is provided.

Preparation for adulthood has been central to our review. We want to make sure that children and young people in Ealing are well prepared for adulthood, and travel assistance forms an essential part of this area of development.

We hope that children and young people, parents and carers, professionals in education, health and social care, and residents in our communities will take part in this consultation. We look forward to receiving your feedback on our proposals, as well as your ideas and suggestions.

The council's current post 16 transport policy can be accessed here: [Post 16 Transport Policy](#)

Rationale

Local authorities must prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement outlining the arrangements for transport by 31 May each year. The council must consult on any changes to policy.

For the purpose of this document, post 16 applies to young people of sixth form age and young people with EHC plans up to age 25 where they are continuing on a course started before their 19th birthday.

We want to use this consultation to explore how we can maximise outcomes through efficient and effective delivery of home to school travel and transport for young people post 16.

As part of this review and consultation the council will be looking to create a simplified, Post 16 Discretionary Transport Policy. The new policy will adopt the following principles

- Preparation for adulthood
- Social integration of children and young people
- Independence for children and young people with SEND
- Greater flexibility via personal budget
- Equity and accessibility
- Environmentally sustainable transport
- Efficient use of public resources

The current policy is wide ranging and offers transport in line with the 0-16 requirements. This has resulted in council provided transport being in place for a large number of young people. Consequently, there are a high number of individual routes in operation. Based on current EHC plan forecasts, this number is expected to increase by 10-15% per annum.

The revised policy will support those young people who are able to access travel options independently via the use of independent travel training programmes. Supporting young people to prepare for adulthood is outlined as a key principle in Section 1.39 of the SEND code of Practice (2015).

The proposals will provide increased opportunities for young people with SEND to develop their independence. Young people would benefit from the proposed changes, by gaining more autonomy and independence, learning about personal safety and road safety, as well as managing money, recognising landmarks and learning what action to take if things go wrong – all skills which help a person mature and allow them to explore the wider world. It raises aspirations and enables young people to have a social life and meet friends or attend clubs without needing an adult in support.

The proposed policy allows young people to access a wider range of transport options than is currently provided by the council. This approach also allows greater flexibility, enabling young people to change and adapt arrangements as and when required; for example, as plans change during the day. Under the current policy, travel assistance arrangements and scheduling can be quite inflexible, and a young person who wishes to remain at their provision for enrichment or social activities is unable to do so. The proposed policy allows for flexibility that may enable young people to take up these activities more easily.

Under the proposed policy, the council continues to be able to exercise discretion when considering cases with exceptional circumstances.

The current policy

While Ealing do not have any documented criteria in the policy, it applies the policy considering the following:

- Whether the young person would have considerable difficulty in walking or using public transport (accompanied as necessary) due to their special educational needs or disability
- Whether the young person has a physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport, or suitable public transport is not conveniently available – for example wheelchair users, students who require specialist seating, harnesses, head restraints or other specialist facilities.
- Whether the young person has emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community.
- The distance and complexity of the journey to and from school/college, and the public transport routes potentially available.
- Whether the young person would be vulnerable and at risk of danger to themselves or the general public if they use public or other transport (accompanied as necessary)
- Whether the young person would be able to travel independently to school if suitably travel trained and supported.

The current policy offers a lot of discretion about the forms of transport offered which has resulted in council provided transport being in place for a large number of young people.

The current policy does not provide accessible information to parents and young people on the types of travel assistance available and what is likely to be offered. Therefore, parents and young people are not well informed about the options available to them outside of Council provided transport.

Proposed changes

The proposals change eligibility for support to young people who would meet the criteria due to the nature and complexity of their needs including those with:

- profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD),
- severe learning disabilities (SLD),
- complex physical disabilities or medical needs, and
- those with autism, social communication or social, emotional and mental health needs in addition to SLD.

A revised policy will support young people to access travel options independently via the use of independent travel training programmes. Supporting young people to prepare for adulthood is outlined as a key principle in Section 1.39 of the SEND code of Practice (2015). Chapter 8 of the Code of Practice sets out:

- "...how professionals across education (including early years, schools, colleges and 16-19 academies), health and social care should support children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities to prepare for adult life and help them go on to achieve the best outcomes in employment, independent living, health and community participation."

The options we are consulting on are as follows:

Option 1: Maintain the current criteria

- Whether a child or young person has considerable difficulty in walking or using public transport (accompanied as necessary) due to their special educational needs or disability.
- Whether a child or young person has a physical or medical disability that rules out the use of free public transport, or suitable public transport is not conveniently available – for example wheelchair users, students who require specialist seating, harnesses, head restraints or other specialist facilities.
- Whether a child or young person has emotional/behavioural difficulties that severely affect their ability to use free public transport or access alternative travel options in the community.
- The distance and complexity of the journey to and from school, and the public transport routes potentially available.
- Whether a child or young person would be vulnerable and at risk of danger to themselves or the general public if they use public or other transport (accompanied as necessary).
- Whether a child or young person would be able to travel independently to school if suitably travel trained and supported.

Option 2:

- Travel assistance would only be funded via an Independent Personal Support Budget (IPSB) for those that present with complex medical and/or health needs.
- Independent Travel Training (ITT) would be arranged for children and young people who are able to access this support, enabling the use of alternative means of public transport.
- Council arranged transport would only be provided in exceptional circumstances connected to an individual's learning difficulties and/or disabilities and where no alternative mode of travel is available, arranged transport would be considered, normally on a shared basis.
- A charging policy in-line with agreed criteria would be applied.

Option 3:

- The offer consists of personal budgets, with exceptional circumstances criteria outlined and alternative transport considered on a case-by-case basis. Charging policy applied to all cases.

Who are we consulting?

We are consulting with the public on our proposals, specifically the following groups requesting their views:

- Parents, carers, children and young people;
- Professionals in schools and further education and governors;
- Professionals from social care and health services;
- Parent and carers groups, including Ealing Parent Carer Forum, Contact, SENDIASS and Mencap
- Councillors
- Residents and council taxpayers.

During the consultation period, there will be significant engagement with children and young people with SEND to understand their experiences of travel to educational settings, their aspirations for independence and adulthood and what supports them to arrive safely, on time and ready to learn. Parent, carers and residents will be engaged through public meetings.

How are we consulting?

We are carrying out an online survey to get views on our proposals. We welcome your responses and feedback, along with any other ideas, comments and suggestions you wish to provide in relation to travel needs of post-16 young people accessing education. The survey is available via the [council's website](#) and via the Ealing Local Offer site. We will also provide paper copies and an 'easy read' version.

The public events will also be an opportunity to discuss the proposals. Details of event times and locations are available on Ealing Council's website and the Ealing Local Offer site.

What are the timescales?

We are consulting for 6 weeks, starting on 8 January 2025. Once the consultation has closed, we will review the responses and prepare a report for the Cabinet members. Cabinet members will consider any proposals to change our Post 16 Discretionary Transport Policy and make a decision in April 2025. If there are any changes to our policy, these will be published by May 2025 and we will implement any agreed changes from 1 September 2025, with transitional arrangements as necessary.

Information about our equalities impact assessment

We have written an Equalities Analysis Assessment (EAA), focusing on the proposals identified in the consultation. Once the consultation has closed and responses reviewed, the EAA will be updated and shared with Cabinet Members. The EAA will be taken into account before making a decision on any changes to the current policy.

How to respond

Please read this consultation document before answering any questions on the survey.

The easiest way to respond is via the [online survey](#).

If you require a paper copy of either the consultation document and/or the survey, please contact senta@ealing.gov.uk. The deadline for all responses, including any paper copy responses, is Wednesday **19 February 2025**, 5pm.