

Post-16 Discretionary Travel Policy Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

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Ealing Council is consulting on our Post 16 Discretionary Transport Policy. This is something all councils are required to do periodically. Ealing Council wants to make sure we continue to deliver effective travel assistance for young people with special educational needs (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 introducing a more detailed policy that takes into account the individual needs of young people and provides more flexibility in how travel assistance is provided.

Q1: What is the main focus of the new draft policy?

The new draft policy emphasises supporting independence and preparing young people for adulthood, including employment, by providing travel assistance to learners of sixth form age (16-18) and continuing learners aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

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."

Q2: Are there any changes proposed to the eligibility criteria for travel assistance?

Yes, the new draft policy includes a more detailed assessment of eligibility, considering factors such as receipt of funding from the 16-19 Bursary Fund, ability to travel independently, and specific individual needs such as.

- Profound and multiple learning difficulties
- Complex medical or physical needs
- Severe learning difficulties with overlapping social communication difficulties.
- Multi-sensory impairment
- Challenging behaviour directed at self or others.

Q3: How has the provision of travel assistance changed?

The new draft policy outlines the same three main provisions of travel assistance:

- Personal Independence Budget (PIB) – this allows for greater flexibility for families in the type of travel assistance and timing,
- independent travel training, and
- arranged transport.

Each provision is designed to offer flexibility and support the individual needs of young people.

Q4: What would be the new financial contributions required for arranged transport?

For the academic year 2025/2026, the new draft policy proposes financial contributions for arranged transport: £380 per annum for households on low income and £1,140 per annum for all other young people. These contributions would be paid in three termly instalments.

Q5: Are there any changes proposed to the appeal process for travel assistance decisions?

No. The new draft policy proposes the same two-stage appeal process for parents/carers who wish to appeal a decision regarding travel assistance. This includes a case review by a senior officer and an independent panel review.

Q6: How does the new draft policy address dual and link placements?

This is no change proposed. However greater clarity is provided by specifying that schools are responsible for arranging and paying for transport for dual placements and link placements. This includes additional transport assistance for earlier or later times of the school day.

Q7: Why are collection points proposed in the new draft policy?

The new draft policy introduces the use of collection points, similar to bus stops, to reduce the time needed for routes and to support young people in becoming more independent. The council would assess individual needs to determine the suitability of routes for collection points.

Q8: How does the new draft policy support young people with the most complex special educational needs and disabilities?

The new draft policy acknowledges that achieving independence may not be possible for some young people with the most complex SEND needs. The council would carefully consider and assess individual needs.