

# **Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for children aged 5 to 16**

## **Introduction**

This document sets out our Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy and describes how the Council fulfils its duties and exercises its discretionary powers as required by the Education Act 1996 and subsequent legislation and guidance.

The policy explains the criteria for eligibility for travel assistance for pupils to their school or college for children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years old). It describes how parents and carers can apply for travel assistance and how decisions are made. It sets out how parents and carers may appeal against decisions that they believe do not comply with this policy.

The Council will have regard in any decisions made under the Policy to its public-sector equality duty.

## **Policy statement**

Camden Council is committed to ensuring that all pupils have a great start to life, are safe and healthy and have access to high quality education so that they can achieve their full potential. The Children and Families Act 2014 commits partners to work together to develop services which strengthen the abilities and resilience of children and their families to be independent.

The Council is also committed to meeting the educational needs of as many children and young people as possible within local schools. In many cases, this will mean that pupils can walk or cycle to school with their parents or carers. This policy sets out how we will help the small number of pupils who find it difficult to travel to school or college without some assistance.

As a Council we want to make sure we continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities for home to school travel assistance to meet the travel needs of children and young people, enabling them to access their place of education. The Council acknowledges that without this service some of the Borough's children and young people would be unable to access their school or college, especially those who have significant additional needs, are isolated within the community, or deemed extremely vulnerable.

Camden Council believe that the young people with special educational needs in Camden value independence highly, and that they want their parents, schools and the services that support them to help them prepare for adulthood, including continued access to education, employment opportunities and access to essential services and activities in the community. The ability to travel independently is important to them now to attend school, participate in community life and socialise with friends; it is also fundamental to their future ambitions.

We want to support parents and carers to fulfil their responsibility to ensure their school-aged children attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school. Those children and young people not in receipt of travel assistance from the Council can use a wide

range of forms of travel in Camden, accompanied as necessary, including bus, train, concessionary fares, walking and cycling.

Camden is also committed to reducing emissions and improving Air Quality, to improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable residents.

This home to school travel assistance policy sets out travel assistance options which may be employed to assist eligible children and young people; please note that references to transport within this document are related to travel assistance.

Travel assistance may take one of the following forms:

- Provision of a bus or train pass
- Training to travel independently (walking and using public transport)
- Reimbursing of mileage costs for parents or carers
- Provision of a private bus, coach, or minibus
- Provision of taxis or licensed private car hire (in extenuating circumstances).

## **Eligibility**

Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their statutory school-aged children (age 5 to 16) attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school.

A child becomes of compulsory school age at the start of term after their fifth birthday and ceases to be compulsory school age on the last day of the academic year in which they are in year 11. This applies to both children with and without an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

There are four core categories of eligible children set out in law:

- Children living beyond the statutory walking distance from school.
- Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to unsafe walking routes.
- Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems.
- Children from low-income families who have extended rights to travel assistance to a choice of schools.

Ordinarily and in accordance with the Council's statutory duty, children under the age of 5 will not be entitled to travel assistance between their home and school. Where circumstances exist where the Council determines that travel assistance is necessary it may exceptionally apply its discretionary powers on a case-by-case basis.

For pupils in year 12 and above (post 16-year-olds), there is no statutory requirement on the Council to provide free transport to their school or college in any case. The Council must decide and set out in a policy statement the arrangements that the Council considers necessary to facilitate attendance.

It is expected that young people in post-16 education will use existing travel schemes to support access to their education placement. More information about existing schemes and discretionary support provided by the Council can be found in Camden's post-16 policy statement.

## **Statutory walking distances**

Camden Council, in accordance with its statutory duty, will provide free home to school transport for children of compulsory school age to the nearest suitable school from their home address who meet the 'qualifying distance' criteria which are:

- Two miles or more for children below the age of eight, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school.
- Three miles or more for children aged eight and above, measured by the shortest walking distance between the home and the school.

Children who live between two and three miles from their school will cease to be entitled to travel assistance from the start of the term following their eighth birthday.

When a child cannot be offered a place at the nearest school to the home address, the Council will, subject to the criteria set within this policy and the qualifying distance being met, provide transport to the next nearest school with space to admit. For transport to be provided in this instance the parent must provide evidence that they have applied for and been refused a place at the school which is the nearest school for their home address and any other schools closer than the school offering admission.

If the child/family qualify for free school meals or they are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, then please refer to section on extended rights.

## **Children with special educational needs or disabilities**

For children with special needs or a disability or mobility problems if it is deemed unreasonable to expect them to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then the distance criteria does not apply and they are entitled to free school travel assistance regardless of the distance they live from school.

## **Unsafe walking routes**

Where a child is not deemed eligible for transport to their nearest qualifying school because it is under the relevant distance threshold and the parent/carer believes the child is unable to walk the assessed route safely (accompanied by an adult as necessary) due to the nature of the route, they should complete the application form outlining the aspect of the route they believe to be unsafe.

If the route is agreed to be unsafe an alternative safe route will be measured and if the child is then beyond the statutory walking distance, he/she will be eligible for free travel assistance.

Where a new route previously considered to be unavailable becomes available (for example through the provision of a new footpath), transport will no longer be provided to any new applicants for travel assistance. Those applicants who have been entitled to transport due to an unavailable route that has become available will be written to with an explanation of the change and provided with assistance for four weeks, or the end of the half-term whichever is longer, after a route is re-assessed before travel assistance will be withdrawn. A parent and or carer will be able to appeal against the decision to withdraw assistance in these circumstances.

### **Extended rights**

Statutory entitlement is extended for children from low-income groups. Children from low-income groups are defined as those who are entitled to free school meals, or those families who are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit (WTC).

Children above the age of 8, but under the age of 11, from low-income families will be entitled to travel assistance to their nearest suitable school if the shortest walking distance between their home and the school is more than two miles.

Children aged 11 and over (years 7 to 11) from low-income families will be entitled to travel assistance if they attend a school which is more than two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) and less than 6 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their home and the school attended is one of the three nearest suitable schools to their home.

Children aged 11 and over (years 7 to 11) from low-income families who are attending their nearest designated faith school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will also be entitled to travel assistance if their school is more than two miles (measured by the shortest walking distance) but not more than 15 miles (measured by the shortest road route) from their home.

When considering whether a faith school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, Camden Council will consider the nature of other schools that may have been named as higher preferences on the application form. For an application for travel assistance to be agreed under this section, the expectation will be that the school that is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will be named above any non-faith schools that have been named on the application form.

Parents must provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief, and this will normally be confirmed by asking their minister of religion to sign the application form.

### **Special educational needs, disability, and mobility problems**

Where a child with special education needs, a disability and/or mobility problems does not meet the other three eligibility criteria but has identified specific needs/circumstances that may mean it is unreasonable to expect the child to walk to school (accompanied by an adult as necessary), then an

assessment based on their individual needs and circumstances will be undertaken.

In determining whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk between home and school, the Council will consider whether the child could reasonably be expected to walk if accompanied and, if so, whether the child's parent or carer can reasonably be expected to accompany their child. Ordinarily, the expectation is that a child will be accompanied by a parent or carer, work commitments and other care will not be considered.

When assessing entitlement for travel assistance for a child with SEND or mobility problems, the Council will consider the individual needs of each child. This may include taking professional advice from educational psychologists, medical officers and teachers and consulting with parents and carers before arriving at a final decision.

Consideration will also be given to the child's physical and medical requirements including any disabilities they may have. Assessments may include face to face contact with the child. The findings and decision will be recorded on a transport assessment form.

The following factors will be taken into consideration when assessing transport entitlement:

- the age of the child
- the distance of the child from school
- whether the child is physically able to walk the journey to school
- whether the walking route is appropriate for the pupil and their specific needs and allows them to arrive in a fit state to be educated
- whether a child's emotional and behavioural difficulties will create a clear health and safety hazard to themselves or others on the journey to school
- the SEND of the child
- any other individual circumstance.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not presented in any order and is for guidance only. Meeting one or more of the criteria does not automatically entitle a child with SEND to transport assistance.

The fact that a child has an EHC plan or attends a special school does not automatically entitle him or her to travel assistance.

Other family circumstances, such as parents and carers attending work or looking after other children, cannot be considered when determining eligibility.

### **Children attending schools on grounds of religion or belief**

Ordinarily, assistance with travel to a faith school will only be provided if it is the nearest suitable school. If parental preference results in children's attendance at a faith school when there are suitable schools nearer to home, then no travel assistance will normally be provided. However, if children meet the Extended Rights eligibility category criteria, then travel assistance to a faith school which is not the nearest suitable school may be considered.

Under Extended Rights, when considering whether a faith school is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief, Camden Council will consider the nature of other schools that may have been named as higher preferences on the application form. For an application for travel assistance to be agreed under this condition, the expectation will be that the school that is preferred on the grounds of religion or belief will be named above any non-faith schools that have been named on the application form.

When applying under Extended Rights for travel to a faith school, parents must provide supporting evidence regarding their genuine adherence to their religion or belief, and this will normally be confirmed by asking their minister of religion to sign the application form.

## **Exceptional circumstances**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 sets out parental duty, with the overriding expectation that parents should undertake their legal responsibility to get their child(ren) to and from school and as such the Council will need to be satisfied that the parent has demonstrated why they, for social, medical, financial, or personal reasons cannot undertake this duty.

Recognising that the Council's discretionary powers should not be unreasonably restricted by its general policy, the Council will consider and may agree requests for home to school transport where there are considered to be exceptional circumstances that prevent a child accessing their school unless travel assistance is put in place. If the parent believes exceptional circumstances exist and assistance with travel is demonstrated as necessary, then a transport application form must be completed and submitted with all relevant information and evidence for consideration. What counts as exceptional will, however, be considered in the context of the rest of the policy and in line with the spirit of the Policy as a whole.

The determination will be based on evidence received to support the case whether transport is necessary for the child to receive an education. Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances could have reasonably been foreseen by the parent/carer. For example, moving to temporary accommodation owing to flood damage cannot be foreseen, whereas choosing a school other than a child's nearest school and realising following this decision that transport is not available could be foreseen.

The council will have regard in any decisions made under the Policy to its public-sector equality duty.

In any decisions made under the Policy, the council will have considered its public-sector equality duty and will make clear in any such decisions, what factors have been considered in that regard (note that these factors may be obvious from the face of the decision if they relate to disability but may be less obvious in other contexts)

Where it is decided that a child does not qualify for assistance with travel based on the presented needs/circumstances then it remains solely the parent/ carer's responsibility to ensure school attendance or consider transferring the child to a more local school.

In all cases the decision whether to exercise discretion will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

## **Children below the age of five**

There is no legal requirement for the Council to make special arrangements for children under the age of five to travel between home and school. The Council expects that children under the age of five will be taken to their educational provision by a parent or guardian. However, Camden Council may use its discretionary powers to provide Travel Assistance for children who are aged four and entering the reception year at primary school if extenuating circumstances have been demonstrated.

## **Appeals**

Parents/carers of children who live in Camden and who wish to appeal a decision that did not grant Travel Assistance regarding one of the following, may apply for their case to be considered at a Stage 1 appeal in relation to any of the following:

- their child's eligibility
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances and
- the safety of the route.
- the travel arrangements offered.

During an appeal about an application for travel assistance, travel assistance will not be provided to the child/young person unless the appeal concerns the travel arrangements offered, in which case the offered arrangements will be available pending the appeal decision. Where the appeal concerns a change to existing travel arrangements, then the previously agreed travel arrangements will continue until the review is complete

### **Stage one: Case review by a senior officer**

Parents/carers must complete a stage one appeal form on which they must indicate whether they believe the original decision to be wrong or whether they wish their case to be considered as an exception to the policy. The form must be returned with details of the case within 20 working days from receipt of the original transport decision.

The written request should detail why the parent/carer believes the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/ or family circumstances they believe should be considered.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the written request a senior officer, who was not involved with making the original decision, will review the case. More complex cases may sometimes exceed the 20-working day turnaround time for review.

The senior officer will write to the parent/carer, normally within five working days of the review, setting out:

- the decision reached
- how the review was conducted
- information about other departments and/ or agencies that were consulted as part of the process
- what factors were considered
- the rationale for the decision reached and
- information about how the parent/carer can escalate their case to stage two (if appropriate).

Where possible, applications for review at stage one of the review process should be accompanied by independent supporting evidence such as from a GP or consultant, a social worker, the police, other local authority officers and copies of relevant court orders as appropriate.

Except for eligibility based on extended entitlement for families on low income, qualification for travel assistance is not means- tested, and family income will not normally be given special consideration under this review process.

When considering appeals, the following will also not normally be considered:

- Parent/carers' work or other commitments
- Attendance by siblings at other schools
- A work experience placement
- An address other than the home address, including a childminder's address
- Ad hoc visits to other establishments or locations
- Out of hours clubs (for example breakfast club or after school activities).

### **Stage two: Case review by an independent panel**

If the parent/carer remains unhappy with the decision at stage one of the appeal, they can complete a 'Stage 2 appeal form' to request that their case is escalated for consideration by an independent panel.

The independent appeal panel will be independent of the original and stage one decision-making process (but are not required to be independent of the local authority) and suitably experienced. Panel members may include officers of the local authority as including officers on independent panels will strengthen the experience and knowledge of the panel and allow appeals to be heard more rapidly as there will be a larger number of panel members to draw on.

Requests for a stage two appeal must be made within 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision.

Stage two appeals will normally be considered within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carers request for it to be escalated. Any additional supporting documents should be supplied by the parent at least 10 working days prior to the review hearing date. A copy of the paperwork that has been submitted to the stage two appeal panel will be sent to the parent at least seven working days prior to the review.

The parent/carer will be asked to indicate on the 'Stage 2 appeal form' whether they wish to attend the appeal to present their case verbally. An officer for the local authority will also be invited to present the local authority's case. Parent/carers are not required to attend and if they do not indicate that they wish to attend, the review will be scheduled to be heard in their absence.

The stage appeal panel will give equal consideration to all case reviews whether conducted in the presence of all parties or heard in the absence of one/both parties. If the panel considers that further information is required, the case will be adjourned so that the information can be made available.

The clerk at the stage two appeal will write to the parent/carer, normally within five working days of the review, setting out:

- the decision reached
- how the review was conducted
- information about other departments and/ or agencies that were consulted as part of the process
- what factors were considered
- the rationale for the decision reached and
- information about the parent/carer's right to put the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (see below).

### **Local Government Ombudsman**

There is a right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, but only if the complainant considers that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the review has been handled. Further advice is available on the [Local Government Ombudsman website](#) or on the Local Government Ombudsman advice line on 0300 061 0614.

If the complainant considers the decision of the independent panel to be flawed on public law grounds, the complainant may also apply for judicial review.

### **Travel assistance options**

#### **Forms of travel assistance**

The Council will review the travel needs of all eligible children and decide the most appropriate form of assistance that will be provided. The form of travel offered will reflect the most appropriate use of public funds to ensure cost effective provision is in place, while also ensuring that any agreed specific requirements, such as medical/ mobility or health needs are also considered where necessary.

#### **Journey times**

The nature of transport congestion in Camden means that travelling times can vary greatly. It is expected that children should arrive at school safely and fit to learn. Journey times should reflect this. Government guidance is that best

practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes. In some journeys, the upper limit on planned journey times may be exceeded and in planning routes, the maximum time recommendations of 45 minutes for primary school children and 75 minutes for secondary school children will not be the overriding consideration. This would allow children and young people who could potentially share transport to do so.

However, if the Council departs from the national guidelines on journey times, it will ensure the planned route is not of such duration that the pupil is unable, because of stress or strain, to learn properly (whether at school or at home). The Council will take into consideration the pupil's age and stage of development. The 45-minute maximum planned journey time for primary-aged pupils contained in national guidance will be maintained and only exceeded in certain circumstances, such as journeys which enable a child to attend the setting which best meets their needs.

Where a child is eligible for travel assistance, the following types of assistance may be offered:

- Bus pass
- Train pass
- Independent travel training
- Reimbursing of mileage costs for parents or carers who are able and willing to take their child to school
- Provision of a private bus, coach, or minibus
- Provision of taxis or licensed private hire car (in exceptional circumstances)
- Shared contract transport vehicle (coach, minibus, taxi) using collection point
- Shared contract transport vehicle (coach, minibus, taxi) using home collection
- Other bespoke travel options that enable travel and the development of travel skills and independence like a Travel Buddy.

Where a Camden travel pass is not appropriate, such as where a child is travelling to an out of Borough school, parents can claim for reimbursement of the cost for their child to travel to school by bus or train. Parents will be asked to submit a claim form at the end of each term and evidence of the cost of the tickets purchased must be submitted. The refund will be for the lowest equivalent public transport rate between the pupil's home and the school.

### **Travel allowance**

Where reimbursement is the most cost-effective method of providing home to school travel assistance, for example where no public transport service or contracted vehicle is available, parents who take their child to school by car may claim a mileage allowance for the journeys undertaken to take and collect their child to and from school. The mileage rates to be used will be based on either Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rates, or, agreed on an individual basis with parents where the alternative would be high-cost individual transport. Mileage will be calculated by the Council and will be costed based on two or four journeys per day (depending on circumstances)

using the shortest road route from the home address to the school. For car users taking more than one child, only a single application will be considered per family.

Taxis will only be provided if there is no alternative mode of transport which provides a suitable journey to school or if a child's medical condition and/or disability means that he/she is unable to travel using the alternative modes of assistance that are available.

No bus/train tickets will be issued for part journeys of one mile or less unless that route has been deemed to be an unsafe walking route or unless a child cannot walk the distance due to special educational needs, disability, or mobility problems.

Provision will be reviewed periodically and if a more economical mode of transport becomes available then the parent will be given notice of a change to the mode of transport.

A parent or carer may choose to accept the travel allowance instead of arranged travel assistance by the Council. This enables families to make their own arrangements to facilitate travel and access to education.

Any arrangements made by the parent using the travel allowance are the responsibility of the parent.

Where there are two or more children living at the same address and attending the same school and the independent travel allowance has been agreed for one child, additional travel assistance will not be provided for the other children as all children would be expected to travel together.

If the parent transports siblings to different schools the allowance due would be based on the shortest road distance between home and school A, plus the shorter road distance between school A and school B for each journey.

The travel allowance is based on the child's attendance being over 80% for the full year. Attendance records will be requested from the school at the end of each term. If the child's attendance shows poor attendance in the Autumn or Spring terms then the parent may be transferred to the standard travel reimbursement rate instead of the travel allowance. Alternatively, if the child's attendance is below 80% then the final month's payment will be reduced.

If a parent is in receipt of the travel allowance but is temporarily unable to transport their child to school due to a short-term illness or medical condition, assistance may be provided. Any request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Mileage reimbursement may be offered to parents/carers of pupils who are entitled to free home to school transport, where this offers best value for money to the council.

## **Independent travel**

### **Independent Travel Training (ITT)**

Local authorities have a duty to encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people in education and training. This includes mainstream pupils, people with learning difficulties or disabilities up to the age of 25. Independent travel training aims to achieve this.

Independent travel is a valuable skill for preparing for adulthood, an essential employability skill, and provides greater opportunities for young people, not least increasing confidence in their abilities and reducing their sense of reliance on family members.

In line with the Council's aims and objectives to support independence and prepare young people for adulthood, and where appropriate employment, ITT will be expanded as an option.

The Council will identify young people who could benefit from ITT and contact their families with a view to undertaking a travel assessment.

The Council may also contact young people and their families who will be transitioning from compulsory education into Post 16 and a travel training assessment will be carried out, with the support of the family, to confirm the suitability of the young person for the travel training programme, considering the following criteria:

- Existing level of independent travel skills
- The likelihood of the pupil being eligible for SEN transport under the 16 to 19 policy
- The age of the pupil
- The distance between home and school
- The SEND of the pupil
- The route which the young person would need to undertake
- Journey times using public transport and the complexity of the journey
- The frequency of the journeys required.

This assessment would take place before the pupil undertakes the ITT programme, which would last for approximately four to six weeks. During the programme, the pupil will travel to and from their education or training provision each day with their dedicated one to one ITT trainer.

During the period when a pupil is taking part in the ITT, this will be their travel assistance offer. At the end of the ITT programme, the Council will review the pupil's progress with the family to decide if it is appropriate for the pupil to continue to travel independently. If it is not appropriate for the pupil to travel independently, their travel assistance offer will be reviewed. Although it is expected that most young people would benefit from ITT, it is however acknowledged that for some young people, due to the nature of their SEND, ITT will not be appropriate.

## Collection points

Collection points are similar to bus stops, where the Council identifies designated pick-up and drop-off locations for the pupil to meet the bus or taxi rather than offering a door-to-door service. This reduces the time needed for the route to pick up the pupils and supports children and young people to become more independent and better prepares them for adulthood.

The Council will assess individual needs to determine suitability of routes for collection points. In most cases, collection points will be considered for children attending mainstream settings. Where a route has been identified as suitable for collection points to be introduced, the Council will consult with the parents and carers of children already on those routes over a four-week period on the introduction of a collection point and to ensure that the proposed arrangements are appropriate; for example, the location of the collection point, which should be no more than a maximum of one mile from the home. The Council will also ensure that it is aware of any individual circumstances which may mean that a collection point is not appropriate for a pupil or pupils on that route due for example to their additional needs.

Achieving this level of independence will not be possible for some children and young people with the most complex SEND needs, and in some cases parents' own mobility or disability may impact on them being able to accompany their child to a collection point. Where this is the case, the ambition for the service is to improve the range of options available for families to take responsibility for their own children's transport where this is desired and appropriate. In such circumstances, the Council will carefully consider and assess the individual child's needs as well as the mobility and or disability of their parents.

Following a decision to introduce a collection point, the Council will provide not less than 6 weeks notification to families (which includes any school holidays that fall in the 6-week period) before the collection point is established. If a collection point is implemented, parents and carers who disagree that the transport offer is suitable for their child will be able to appeal.

Where a collection point is allocated, it is the parent's or carer's responsibility to make sure that their child travels to and from the collection point and transfers to and from the vehicle safely.

For parents who are temporarily unable to take their child to a collection point, no temporary assistance will be provided in those circumstances. This is because the child's special educational need or disability has not changed and the transport service from the collection point is available.

All collection points will be assessed in advanced for their suitability.

- Wherever a bus stop can be legally used as a collection point, it will be
- Minibuses can stop to collect and drop off on yellow and double yellow lines; vehicles cannot stop on red routes, white zig zags (near a zebra crossing) or school keep-clear hatchings

- The driver always plans not to cause obstructions to other road users while making a drop off or collection and will try to stop in parking areas or bays
- Collections or drop-off are always made kerb-side
- Each collection point is physically assessed before being used in service; a driver will go out and access to see if the location is safe (for example, a well-lit public location, not too close to a junction or on the brow of a hill)
- The drivers complete dynamic risk assessments at the time of collections or / drop-offs in the eventuality of any changes (new road layouts, another road user in the stopping space) and will slightly adjust the collection point if it is unsafe to stop.

## **Transport standards**

This section sets out some of the operational standards that we will follow in delivering our statutory responsibilities for home to school transport. We want to make this transparent for all parents and carers so that they understand how the service operates.

### **Provision of contracted transport vehicles (coaches, buses, minibuses, and taxis)**

When a child is entitled to home to school transport under the Council's policy, the Council will provide suitable transport and seek to ensure this is cost effective. The transport provided may take the form of a bus pass, train pass, seat on a contract vehicle, for instance a hired coach, a minibus or shared taxi. A travel allowance can also be provided for children when requested by parents or carers and where it is more cost effective.

### **Provision of transport for part-time hours**

Home to school travel assistance will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of transport for part-time hours does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided.

Schools and parents and carers should take this into account when bespoke hours are being set for a child. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

However, where exceptional circumstances can be evidenced to show that a child with an EHC plan is receiving education on a part time basis in school then the Council may provide travel assistance until the child is reintegrated into full time school attendance if a reintegration plan can be provided outlining the child's return to full time education.

### **Provision of transport for after-school and non-educational activities**

In accordance with statutory guidance, home to school transport will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of transport for non-statutory education or clubs does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided. Parents are

expected to make travel arrangements for their children in these circumstances. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

### **Home address and house moves**

In accordance with statutory guidance, home to school transport will only be provided from and to a single address at which the child or young person is habitually and normally resident. Where a child splits their time equally between addresses, transport will be assessed from the address which is registered with the school as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant school admission application form.

### **For children without an EHCP**

Assistance with travel will not normally be agreed to a child's existing school if a house-move results in the child living beyond the statutory walking distance from school but there are other nearer schools with an available place.

However, assistance may be agreed if the child is in Years 6, 10 or 11 at the time of the move and if there are extenuating circumstances that the Council deem sufficient to provide assistance on a discretionary basis. Where parents wish their case to be considered on this basis, they should provide details along with independent evidence of their case.

Assistance with travel may also be agreed even if the school attended is not the nearest suitable with places in certain circumstances. If the move is an enforced temporary council move within Camden that is anticipated to last less than 6 months or where a parent has moved to a refuge in Camden, and the distance from home to school meets the agreed criteria, assistance with travel may be considered. Evidence of an enforced temporary council move/move to a refuge must be provided. Travel assistance agreed under this provision may only be agreed for a fixed period and will be subject to periodic review.

### **For children with an EHCP**

If a child with an EHC plan moves address, the SEND team will review the plan to consider if the school being attended is still the nearest suitable school that can meet the child's needs. If it is, and the child continues to meet the criteria to be eligible for travel assistance then assistance will be offered from the new address.

### **Pick-up and drop-off timing**

Routes to and from school and pick-up and drop-off times are planned by the transport provider to be as efficient as possible for all students travelling on the vehicle. Because of this, it is not possible to accommodate the individual circumstances of each family, such as work commitments or taking other children to and from school. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

## **Dual and link placements, inclusion, and pupil referral units**

Dual placements are where a child or young person attends more than one school or where a school arranges a college link placement for a pupil. Dual placements may require additional transport assistance, such as transport at earlier or later times of the school day. Schools are responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of such transport. Where a pupil is on the roll at one school but visits another school for inclusion or link purposes, the school where the pupil is usually based will be responsible for arranging and paying for transport. These arrangements also apply to pupil referral units.

## **Children attending residential placements**

Children who attend a residential school that has been named in their EHC plan as their nearest suitable school will be entitled to travel assistance to take them to and from school as follows:

- Weekly/Fortnightly boarding placements – travel assistance will be provided to for children to travel to school on a Sunday evening/Monday morning, as directed by the school, and to travel home at the end of each week/fortnight, or earlier as directed by the school for unplanned or planned earlier closures
- Termly residential placements – travel assistance will be provided for 12 single journeys to cover travel home at the start and end of each term and half term
- Permanent (52 week) residential placements – travel assistance will be provided for 12 single journeys each academic year. These are at the discretion of the parent and school.
- Any additional trips will be the responsibility of the parent.

## **Passenger assistants**

Passenger assistants (escorts) are not automatically provided. In considering whether a route needs a passenger assistant, the Council generally takes account of the following:

- A child's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required
- Where an individual child's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle
- Where the number of children travelling together necessitates the provision of a passenger assistant to help manage a group children and their specific support needs on the journey.

Passenger assistants for SEND purposes are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Provision of a passenger assistant at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement; the requirement can be reassessed at any time in the academic year, and in the event of any change in circumstances.

## Medication and health interventions

All Passenger Assistants have received accredited emergency first aid training.

Although there is no statutory duty for transport staff to administer medication, they are expected to ensure the health and safety of all pupils in their care. First aid training includes: managing the symptoms of shock, dealing with an unconscious casualty, cardiac arrest, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, choking, and seizures.

The emergency services can advise members of transport staff about the closest automated external defibrillator for use in treating a patient in cardiac arrest.

Operators will ensure that every driver and passenger assistant is able to respond to an emergency, however, they will not normally be expected to administer medical assistance. Every parent, as part of their application, is required to provide detailed information about their child's SEND and/or medical needs.

This information forms the basis of the pupil's transport plan. In some cases, where a child has very specific and complex needs, an additional care plan from medical professionals may be required. A needs assessment will be undertaken to ensure the correct level of medical support can be arranged and where it is deemed to be unsafe for a pupil with complex or acute medical needs to travel with only a passenger assistant, Camden Council will seek to secure a medically trained professional from our colleagues in Health to accompany the pupil on the vehicle and meet their healthcare needs. For clarity these professionals will not be considered as a passenger assistant or transport staff, they will be considered as specialist 1:1 health support separate from travel assistance provision.

Members of transport staff are not permitted to administer medication or to replace medical accessories (for example, gastrostomy or tracheotomy tubes) on board a vehicle. The exception to these are pre-loaded EpiPens® or pre-loaded buccal midazolam devices as these are loaded with the correct dosage of medication and do not require members of transport staff to accurately measure medication within a confined and possibly moving space. This can only be done with prior agreement from Camden Council and the appropriate training having been completed.

Medication can be transported along with the pupil for use whilst they are at their destination, but this must be advised to the transport staff and advice should be sought from Camden Council as to whether it requires a handover document to be signed.

In the event of an emergency on board a vehicle, the procedure is for the passenger assistant or driver to seek guidance from medical professionals by calling 999 and asking for a paramedic crew to attend the scene. It is for parents or carers to decide whether they wish for their child to travel on regular transport in these circumstances.

## **Shared travel**

Ordinarily children and young people travelling to and from school or college will be expected to share their transport with other children or young people. This promotes integration and independence, social skills as well as being more sustainable and cost effective. Conversely, travelling on their own may lead to social isolation of a young person and a delay in development of essential social behaviours and skills. It also impacts on an individual's ability to access other forms of travel and to travel with others.

In developing a travel assistance policy with a focus on enabling independence and preparing for adulthood such as employment or shared living away from home, individual transport will only be agreed in extenuating circumstances. This would normally be linked to other medical needs or where the child or young person is receiving funded one-to-one support at their educational placement.

## **Behaviour of children on transport**

Children, parents, carers, schools, transport operators and the Council all have a role to play in ensuring the appropriate behaviour of children on school transport.

While passenger assistants have a responsibility for safeguarding children and maintaining behavioural standards on the vehicle during the journey, schools will take whatever steps possible to ensure the appropriate behaviour of their students on home to school transport; and will take appropriate action should incidents of poor behaviour be reported. Appropriate action may include the use of sanctions, written warnings, and exclusion from transport. Parents are also expected to take responsibility for their child's behaviour while travelling.

Where a child's behaviour is directly because of a known and diagnosed medical condition and it is agreed by medical advisors and teachers that the child is unable to control their behaviour, the Council will undertake a needs assessment and will consider making alternative arrangements, for example, providing the parent or carer with a mileage allowance or direct payments to make their child's own travel arrangements.

The Council recognises that general poor behaviour, not directly attributable to a child's special educational needs and circumstances, cannot be considered when determining an appropriate safe travel plan. The Council will expect clear standards of acceptable behaviour in the interests of ensuring a safe journey for all pupils and staff as well as other road users.

Reasonable adjustments will be made in cases where behaviour problems persist, and it is judged that the safety of the other passengers is endangered. Where reasonable adjustments cannot be made to deal with behaviour, transport can be withdrawn in individual cases and the Council will provide resources for parents to make alternative travel arrangements.

Pupils exhibiting dangerous behaviour will be subject to two written warnings issued by the Council. If a third warning is given, the transport offer will be

reviewed and may be withdrawn. This action shall only be taken as a last resort and is not considered punishment of the student but is for the safety of all concerned. In this instance the Council would provide a travel allowance instead.

In consultation with schools, the Council may instigate permanent or fixed periods of exclusion from transport. Parents or carers will be responsible for transporting their children during any period of exclusion and ensuring their child's regular attendance at school.

### **Travel assistance agreed in error**

Travel assistance that has been agreed in error or because of incorrect, misleading, or fraudulent information, or because of an assessment error, will be withdrawn. Camden Council will seek reimbursement of any costs that have been obtained fraudulently and reserve the right to take legal action against any person who has made fraudulent application for free home to school transport.

### **How we use your data**

Camden Council respects your rights and is committed to ensuring that it manages your data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2019 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). You can find out more about how we manage your data on the [privacy notice section of our website](#).