

Nottingham City Council Post 16 Transport Policy Statement

Academic Year 2023-2024

Please note – there have been changes made to the text and layout below, but no Policy changes made this year.

Purpose

The purpose of the Post 16 Transport Policy is to facilitate access to education for Nottingham City resident students of sixth form age. Nottingham City Council is committed to working closely together with young people, families, schools and colleges to ensure that:

- Children and young people are safe and supported to access education
- Young people and families have confidence in the travel assistance offer

The Council recognises that:

- Encouraging young people's independence will develop their skills for life, their confidence and social skills, and increase their opportunities for continuing education, training and employment

The Council also has a duty to:

- Manage public money responsibly
- Provide value for money services
- Promote the use of sustainable travel and transport

Statement of Intent

Post 16 students in general are encouraged to use sustainable travel such as walking and cycling to travel to and from colleges in and around the city. Where this is not a practical option students are advised to use public transport services. Nottingham is well served with an extensive public transport network and frequent bus services operate to, or nearby, all Sixth Form Schools, Colleges and Further Education establishments.

Nottingham City Council does not provide any financial assistance for non-disabled students travelling to and from places of post 16 education. Local public transport operators offer discounted season tickets, which allow unlimited travel across the city. More information on the most suitable travel pass can be found on these webpages:

- Nottingham City Transport - <https://www.nctx.co.uk/fares-and-tickets>
- Trentbarton - <https://www.trentbarton.co.uk/fares-and-tickets/choosing-the-right-ticket>
- NET Tram - <https://www.thetram.net/tickets>

Policy

The duty placed on local authorities in respect of the provision of transport to post 16 students requires a transport policy statement to be prepared and published in each year, by 31 May, disclosing the provision being made by the City Council for this group. Nottingham City Council has a power of discretion which it can use to offer financial assistance towards a person's reasonable travel expenses. The Council considers any application for transport assistance for a person of sixth form age with

special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) against this policy. Assistance will only be provided where the following circumstances apply, and the student is attending the nearest appropriate establishment offering the majority of the chosen course(s), and that establishment is more than 3 miles by the shortest walking route from the home address:

1. **Students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan)**

Where a post 16 student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC plan) and is attending the school or college named within their EHC plan, as the nearest appropriate school/college for their post 16 education – public transport will be promoted for this group and travel training referrals will be made for all students with the expectation that they will be assessed for suitability for training by the end of the first term of post 16 education. A charge for transport will be made on a sliding scale based on the income of the family at the time of application. Low income families, will be required to contribute £250 towards the cost of transport. All other applicants will be required to make a contribution of £500 towards the cost of transport.

2. **Students with SEND without an EHC plan**

For students with complex SEND without an EHC plan, assistance will only be provided where the student is attending the nearest appropriate establishment offering the majority of the chosen course(s), and that establishment is more than 3 miles by the shortest walking route from the home address. Low income families, will be required to contribute £250 towards the cost of transport. All other applicants will be required to make a contribution of £500 towards the cost of transport. All applications will be considered based on the evidence provided to support the claim at the time of application.

Financial support - The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The Department for Education has made funding available to educational institutions to support the most financially disadvantaged 16- to 19-year-olds and those young people who most need help with the costs of staying in education.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is distributed in 2 distinct ways:

Central allocation to eligible young people

A yearly bursary of up to £1,200 is available to young people in one of the four defined vulnerable groups:

- Young people in care
- Care leavers
- Young people on Income Support or Universal Credit who are supporting themselves
- Disabled young people (in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payment).

Institutions are responsible for verifying that young people meet the criteria for vulnerable student bursaries. Institutions must complete a 16 to 19 Bursary Fund vulnerable students funding claim form in order to request funding to be released to them for vulnerable students.

Discretionary awards made by institutions

Educational settings are also allocated funding from which they can make discretionary awards to young people. Discretionary awards are for any students who are facing genuine financial barriers to participating. Individual institutions determine eligibility criteria and the frequency and conditions of payments.

More detailed information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund can be found on the Department for Education website at <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

To find out if you qualify, and how to make an application for the Bursary Fund please contact your education setting's Student Support Team.

Application of the policy

General terms of provision

1. Whilst the Council is not required, by law, to provide financial support for the transport of Post 16 students, it continues to provide assistance in this area. Eligibility will be conditional upon the student attending, on a full time basis, the nearest establishment offering the majority of the course.
2. The transport provided to eligible students should be the most cost effective to Nottingham City Council and will take the form of a travel pass to use on public transport wherever possible.
3. Taxis will not be provided. The only exceptions to this will be for those students with severe physical or learning difficulties where, upon receipt of sufficient evidence, taxi provision will be considered alongside other options such as Independent Travel Training, a mileage allowance or a Personal Transport Budget.
4. Door to door transport will only be provided in exceptional circumstances. Young people will need to make their own way to the pick-up point, or be supported to do so by their families.
5. The legal requirement to provide education transport where the route is deemed unavailable to be walked, accompanied as necessary, only applies to students of statutory school age. Therefore, such circumstances will not confer an entitlement to transport assistance for post 16 students.
6. Transport services will not be tailored to meet individual timetables but consideration will be given whenever possible to minimise inconvenience to students. Specific transport will not be provided if the public or contract school bus timetables are not in line with that of the student. In such circumstances students are expected to make suitable adjustments to their travel arrangements.
7. In situations where, as a result of the course chosen by the student, the journey time is lengthy, whilst transport assistance will still be provided, the student/parent will be responsible for managing that journey.
8. Where students are undertaking work placements, apprenticeships or traineeships, travel assistance will only be provided to and from the site of the college/learning provider and not to the premises of the employer. In these circumstances learners are advised to contact

their employer or learning provider.

Age

To be eligible for assistance a student must be under 19 years of age at the beginning of the first year of their course. For courses starting in the autumn term the academic year starts on 1 September. For the avoidance of doubt, a student who has already attained or will attain the age of 19 on or before 31 August before starting their course will not be eligible for support from the scheme. Any student aged 19 or over on 31 August in the calendar year of their application, will only be eligible to apply for support if they can demonstrate explicitly that their course is a continuation of one on which they have already successfully completed the first year of study, having started the course prior to attaining the age of 19. The onus will be on the student to prove continuous study.

If a student with SEND attends a course which they started after their 19th birthday, the duty to provide transport only applies where the local authority needs to provide specialist transport to enable them to attend their education placement. This will be provided free of charge. Any other transport arrangements will be subject to the financial contribution identified in this statement.

If a student is 19 or over and is attending a course as part of a formal or informal care plan, and is not eligible for support from the Post 16 transport scheme, they will need to seek support from an alternative funder/provider for the transport necessary to enable them to access that course.

Education provider location

As stated above, where students are undertaking work placements, apprenticeships or traineeships, travel assistance will only be provided to and from the site of the college/learning provider and not to the premises of the employer. In these circumstances learners are advised to contact their employer or learning provider.

Where the course the student is studying is on a split site i.e. one day at one college campus and one day at an alternative college Campus transport will only be provided to eligible students to the main qualifying campus.

For students with an Education, Health and Care Plan, the school/college named in the EHC plan will be considered the appropriate establishment to the students' home address, provided the school/college named in the EHC plan was determined through the EHC assessment process.

Where a parent has decided that they do not wish for their child to go to the nearest school or college that can meet the students' needs and has chosen a placement at a different provider, further away, travel assistance will not be provided, and will remain the responsibility of the parent.

If a student has been entitled to transport to a specialist school for their statutory school years and they are continuing their education at this school, they will continue to be entitled to transport (on payment of the charge) as it will be considered that this school is the nearest establishment that offers the course the student is pursuing and that can best meet their needs. All transport will be reviewed on an annual basis and independent travel training offered where appropriate.

If the student was originally awarded transport to school as an exception to the usual home to school transport policy, there is no automatic entitlement for assistance to continue. Such cases will be assessed individually under current policies. If additional information is submitted to support such applications, this will be taken into consideration at the time of assessment.

Where a student has been entitled to transport to a specialist school for their statutory school years

and they have decided to move to another establishment to complete their schooling they will not automatically be entitled to transport. Their application will be assessed according to the Post 16 Transport Policy and from the information we have received from their school.

Change of address

Where a student changes address during their Post 16 course they must re-apply and their eligibility will be re-assessed using their new address details. All the policy criteria will continue to apply, e.g. if the chosen establishment is no longer the nearest offering the course, the student may no longer be entitled to assistance, but consideration will be given to avoid disruption to their learning. If there are exceptional reasons why the house move is necessary, this information should be provided along with the re-application.

Payment of charges

Students who fulfil the criteria for travel assistance must contribute to the cost of their transport. All participants in the scheme will be required to pay a contribution towards the transport provision, either in one lump sum, or on a monthly basis by direct debit.

If a direct debit is cancelled before the full year's charge has been paid, the transport provision will cease.

For low income families the charge will be £250 per academic year and for all others the charge will be £500 per academic year. There are no grounds on which an individual is exempt from the charge. In some cases, it may be more cost effective for the student or their family to purchase a travel pass directly from the bus or tram company, so this should be considered carefully.

Families applying on the grounds of low income will need to provide documentary evidence. A family will meet the low income criteria if they are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit, or the student is entitled to free school/college meals. Working Tax Credit will gradually be phased out as claimants are transferred onto Universal Credit. Claimants currently in receipt of maximum working tax credit, will become eligible for free school meals under new criteria introduced by the government in April 2018, and therefore retain their eligibility as low income families.

Changes in personal circumstances that affect income status may affect eligibility for the reduced fee. Where circumstances change part way through the year that may affect entitlement to a reduced fee, the family must inform the City Council, using the contact details provided when the travel assistance was granted.

Fuel reimbursements

The City Council may offer the parent/carer of an eligible student a fuel reimbursement to transport their child(ren) from home to school/college instead of providing the student with a taxi or public transport pass. Parents/Carers can indicate their interest in petrol reimbursement on their application. An assessment will be made at the time of allocating travel assistance, and where it is appropriate an offer will be made to the parent/carer. Fuel reimbursements are paid to the parent/carer for the return journey, i.e. the journey to the school or college with the student and the return journey home and vice versa. If the parent/carer receives a fuel reimbursement, the annual contribution charge applicable will be deducted from the final payment. They will be reimbursed once the claims exceed this amount. For example, if the applicant is due to receive £700 in reimbursement for the year they will receive £450 (£700 - £250 (low income charge)), or £200 (£700

- £500 (standard charge)). If the fuel reimbursement would be less than the charge (or reduced charge) it would be more cost effective for the family to undertake transport themselves without applying for a fuel reimbursement.

If a parent/carer requests a fuel reimbursement but there is a suitable City Council contract vehicle that the student would be able to travel on, the student would be allocated the contract vehicle and reimbursement would not be considered unless suitable evidence to support the case was provided, or the City Council contract was discontinued. It is important to note that a fuel reimbursement will only be considered where the cost to the City Council of providing reimbursement is the same or less than the cost of organised transport.

Where a fuel reimbursement is provided, attendance information will be collected and verified, and payments adjusted to take account of absent days.

Independent Travel Training

Students who are assessed as able to benefit from Independent Travel Training by the Nottingham City Council's travel trainer will be offered this training. This will help students become more independent and confident in their everyday lives and give them skills for life. If the training is successful the student will be provided with the appropriate public transport pass for the route they have been trained on and will be expected to use this method to get from home to school/college. The pass will be subject to the same financial contributions outlined above. In some cases, it may be more cost effective for the student or their family to purchase the pass directly from the bus or tram company, so this should be considered carefully.

For more information please visit: <https://Independent Travel Training - Nottingham City Council>

Timeframe for applications

It is expected that applications are made in a timely way so that arrangements and travel passes can be made available in time for the beginning of the new academic year. Most applications should be made between 1 March until 31st July for new starters and student renewals prior to each new academic year. We recognise that families may need to make applications 'in year' as a result of changes to their personal circumstances (e.g. a house move, move to live in the City, move of education course/provision) etc.

Changes to the Policy

Should any significant changes be proposed to this policy or the associated Education Transport Policy/Post 16 Transport Policy Statement, the Council will carry out the necessary consultation processes in line with the relevant Department for Education guidance; giving schools, parents, colleges and young people the opportunity to comment. Details will, as a minimum, be available on the Council's website.

Appeals

If a young person or their family is unhappy with a decision made under this policy, they may appeal. Reasons for the rejection of an application will be made in writing at the point of assessment along with how to appeal. The Local Authority has a 2-stage appeals process as recommended by the Department for Education and the Local Government Ombudsman.

Appeals must be made in writing, either by post or email, using the contact details given in the decision letter or email. The timings for responses may be extended if additional time is required to gather supporting information, or delayed by school/college holidays.

Please note that whilst the appeal process takes place the parent/carer will remain responsible for arranging and funding any travel arrangements that a parent/carer may feel is necessary.

Stage 1: Review by a Senior Officer

- A young person or their parent/carer has 20 working days from the date of the transport decision letter, to make a formal written request asking for a review of the decision.
- The written request should clearly state that it is an appeal, and detail why the parent/carer or young person believes the decision should be reviewed. It should include the details of any personal and/or family circumstances, including medical evidence, they believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.
- Within 20 working days of receipt of a written request, a Senior Officer will review the original decision and send a detailed written notification of the outcome of the appeal, including information about how the parent/carer can escalate their case to Stage 2 (if appropriate)

Stage 2: Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

- If a young person or their parent/carer is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 review of their case, they have 20 working days from the receipt of their decision letter to make a written request to escalate the matter to Stage 2. The written request should clearly state the reasons for requesting an escalation to Stage 2, and it is strongly recommended that further supporting evidence is provided, that hasn't already been considered.
- Within 40 working days of receipt of the parent/carer's written request an Independent Appeal Panel will be arranged. Parents will be invited to attend (in person, if the meeting is being held at a venue, or virtually, according to parental preference and/or government guidelines) and to submit any additional information. The Officer who made the original eligibility decision will also be invited.
- The Independent Appeal Panel members will be independent of the original decision making process (but not required to be independent of Nottingham City Council) and suitably experienced.

Each appeal will be considered on its individual merits and is not intended to set a precedent for any similar case.

If a parent/carer or young person is still not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, there is no further right of appeal to the Council. However, there is still the right to take independent legal action. Also, if a parent/carer or young person feels that their appeal has not been treated fairly or in accordance with

the LA's policy, the Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted for help and advice on 0300 061 0614 or at <https://www.lgo.org.uk/>

Further information

Detailed information about public transport routes, timetables and fares can be found on these webpages:

- Nottingham City Transport - <https://www.nctx.co.uk>
- Trentbarton - <https://www.trentbarton.co.uk>
- NET Tram - <https://www.thetram.net>
- East Midlands Trains - <https://www.eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk>

This policy, and further information about travel assistance from home to school or college can be found on the City Council webpages: https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/school_transport

Contact Details

SEN.Transport@nottinghamcity.gov.uk