

Merton Children, School and Families Department

Policy for Home to School Travel Assistance (Students of Sixth Form Age)

Introduction

1. This guidance sets out the Council's policy on home to school travel for students of sixth form age who are Merton residents. The policy was last reviewed November 2018.
2. This policy does not apply to:
 - a. children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) or Learning Difficulty Assessments.
 - b. children with a temporary mobility issue
 - c. children who have a long term disability or mobility issue that may require specialist transport

Assistance for children meeting any of the criteria listed above would be considered under Merton's SEN and Disabilities Travel policy which can be viewed on the following webpage -

https://directories.merton.gov.uk/kb5/merton/directory/service.page?id=byEVTQAa_wc4

This policy also does not apply to:

- d. children not of sixth form age
- e. children attending a private school sixth form

Free travel within the Transport for London area

3. Transport for London offers free travel on buses and trams to young people who live in London and who are under 19 years of age prior to the start of the academic year if they remain in full time education. As such, the majority of Merton students of sixth form age will not require additional travel assistance to travel to school or college.
4. Parents or carers should apply for a **16 – 18 Zip Oyster Photocard** via Transport for London online or at local post offices. The Zip Card also means that underground and overland trains will be charged at half the adult single fare, and you can purchase a travelcard at the child rate. For more information on the Transport for London travel concessions, please see their website www.tfl.gov.uk.
5. However, there may be some students who have to travel on alternative forms of transport, or by bus outside the Transport for London area. In order to be considered for travel assistance under this policy, the timetabled journey must be more than 75 minutes to a school or college, when travelling on a bus and/or tram route on which the Transport for London free travel concession for 0–16 year-olds applies throughout the entirety of the journey.

Eligibility

6. Assistance with travel can be granted, if the following conditions are met:
 - a. ordinarily resident in the London Borough of Merton at the time of making their application; **and**
 - b. be 16 to 18 years of age (or aged 19, if they are continuing a course that they started before their 19th birthday) **and**
 - c. engaged in learning or training at:
 - a school
 - a further education institution
 - an authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education
 - an establishment funded directly by the Education Funding Agency, for example independent specialist providers for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - a learning provider that is funded by the local authority to deliver accredited programmes of learning which lead to a positive outcome (this could include colleges, charities and private learning providers).
 - d. attending a school/college that is not accessible within a timetabled journey of less than 75 minutes, when travelling by bus and/or tram on which the Transport for London free travel concession applies throughout the entirety of the journey; **and**
 - e. attending a course that is not available at a school/college closer to the student's home address, or at an institution that is accessible within a timetabled journey of less than 75 minutes, when travelling by bus and/or tram on which the Transport for London free travel concession applies throughout the entirety of the journey; **and**
 - f. not be in receipt of help towards their travel costs from any other source; **and**
 - g. the walking distance between the home and the school/college must be more than three miles.

And one of the following:

- a) the student falls within one of the following categories:
 - students who have been in care;
 - students who are on probation or are otherwise considered to be at risk;
 - students who are parents who retain responsibility for their child.

Or

- b) the student or their family, must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance (IBJSA)
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) does not exceed £16,190
 - Financial support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

- Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get)
7. Where a similar course is available within the prescribed walking distance of three miles or is available at an institution that is closer or within a Transport for London timetabled journey of less than 75 minutes by bus and/or tram, the student will be expected to demonstrate how their chosen course meets their needs above this other similar course.
 8. The walking distance between the home and the school is measured as the shortest reasonable walking route, and one that is recognised as a safe walking area, with footpath and lighting.
 9. Assistance will not normally be awarded if a voluntary house-move results in the prescribed distance being breached or the school/college no longer being accessible within a timetabled journey of less than 75 minutes, when travelling by bus and/or tram on which the Transport for London free travel concession applies throughout the entirety of the journey. However, special consideration may be given as a result of an enforced council move.
 10. The authority makes no provision for assistance with travel to children attending independent schools or private colleges.

Assistance available

11. Subject to meeting the eligibility criteria in Section 5, a free bus or train pass or, where a pass cannot be issued, re-imbusement of fares already paid may be issued. Where any re-imbusement is agreed, this will be paid at the lowest equivalent public transport rate.
12. Travel will only be payable for costs incurred at the start and end of the day.
13. Travel will be agreed for the duration of the course being applied for only. If the student changes course or school/college they will be required to make a fresh application.
14. Assistance will be withdrawn if at any time it is discovered that the application has been made fraudulently and the Local Authority will seek reimbursement of any monies that have been paid out in respect of the travel claim.
15. Assistance will be withdrawn if at any time it is discovered that the student lives within the prescribed distance or could travel to the school/college within a timetabled journey of less than 75 minutes, when travelling on a bus and/or tram route on which the Transport for London free travel concession applies throughout the entirety of the journey.

Young people with statements of Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulty Assessments, and Education, Health & Care Plans

16. There is a separate transport policy for young people with special educational needs or disabilities who are attending school and further education colleges. A copy of this policy is available at <https://directories.merton.gov.uk/kb5/merton/directory/service.page?id=byEVTQAawc4>

Special consideration

17. Students who do not satisfy the conditions of this policy may, in exceptional circumstances, apply for special consideration. If a student wishes their case to be specially considered, the application form must be completed and returned with a personal letter giving details of the case, together with any appropriate supporting evidence

Changes in circumstances

18. Any change in circumstances, at any time, that might affect eligibility for assistance with the cost of travel, such as a change of address, course, school or college, or the student leaving the school or college, must be notified immediately in writing to the Admissions Team at the address below.
19. If the student is no longer eligible for travel support, the Travelcard/Train Pass must be returned immediately to the Admissions team, confirming the date that the card was last used. Failure to do so will result in the parent/guardian being financially liable for the proportionate cost of the unused card.

How can students apply?

20. The application form is normally available in June of the year prior to the start of the academic year.
21. Students should complete the application form fully and then ask their school/college to complete the section that confirms the course that the student has been accepted onto. The school/college must confirm full details of the course, and where it is being studied; it will be necessary for them to provide details of each subject.
22. The Form must then be returned to the address at the end of these notes as soon as possible before the start of the course

Other Sources of Funding

23. **Education Bursary Fund** - This is money that you, or your education or training provider, can use to pay for things like clothing, books and other equipment for your course or transport and lunch on days you study or train. More information is available at www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund/overview and from your education provider.
24. **Free travel** - Transport for London offers free travel on buses and trams to young people who live in London and who are under 19 years of age prior to the start of the academic year if they remain in full time education. As such, the majority of Merton pupils will not require additional travel assistance to travel to school. For more information on the Transport for London travel concessions, please see their website www.tfl.gov.uk.
25. **Care to Learn (C2L)** - C2L supports young parents aged up to 19 when learning starts by funding the cost of their Ofsted-registered childcare and associated transport costs. More information on C2L is available by telephoning the helpline on 0800 121 8989, or at www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview.
26. **Residential Support Scheme** - The Residential Support Scheme helps learners access education that is not available within reasonable travelling distance of their home. Further details on the Scheme can be obtained by visiting <https://www.gov.uk/residential-support-scheme>
27. Other help and support can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/find-course> or from your education provider.

Appeals

28. LB Merton has a two stage home to school transport review/appeals process for parents who wish to challenge a decision about:
 - a. The transport arrangements offered
 - b. Their child's eligibility
 - c. The distance measurement
29. Stage one: Review by a senior officer
 - a. parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's home to school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision. 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.

- b. Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request a senior officer will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written outcome setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached
 - what factors were considered;
 - the rationale for the decision reached;
 - information about escalation to stage two (if appropriate).

30. Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel
 - a. A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.
 - b. Within 40 working days an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from the parent and officers and give a detailed written outcome setting out:
 - the nature of the decision reached;
 - what factors were considered;
 - the rationale for the decision reached;
 - information about escalation to the Local Government Ombudsman.

31. The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the process to date and suitably experienced, to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of parents and the local authority.

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