



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

(Draft) Post 16 Transport Policy Statement – Academic Year 2025-26

Transport policy statement for young people aged 16–18 in further education, those continuing learners who are aged 19 and those young people aged 19- 24 (inclusive) with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local authorities do not have a legal responsibility to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support, but they do have a legal duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement covering those young people of sixth form age receiving education or training. However, they are able to agree a policy of providing transport assistance in specific circumstances.
- 1.2 Nevertheless, in most circumstances young people accessing Post 16 education will make their own travel arrangements to access their chosen school or college. They may walk, cycle, use public transport or the council's Spare Seat Scheme to travel to school or college.
- 1.3 For most young people, any travel costs incurred will be their responsibility, or that of their parent or parents.
- 1.4 This policy statement details the transport provision and financial assistance with transport that the council believes are necessary for Oxfordshire residents of sixth form age who are receiving education or training. Therefore, this statement covers those young people in Oxfordshire aged 16 to 18 and those continuing learners who started their course before their 19th birthday.
- 1.5 Travel assistance may also be made available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19 up until they reach the age of 25 years. However, travel assistance for this age group involves submitting a request for a Care Assessment. These assessments are the responsibility of Adult Social Care, not the Transport Eligibility Team.
- 1.6 Travel assistance will normally only be considered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or if the student has a disability which means he/she requires transport arrangements to be provided and the establishment attended is **the nearest suitable placement to the student's main address**.
- 1.7 In all cases, the student, or their parent, will need to apply for transport assistance using Oxfordshire's online system and provide evidence that without transport assistance the student will be unable to attend the educational placement. Therefore, when assessing whether to provide transport assistance we consider:
 - whether transport assistance is being requested to attend the nearest suitable school or college than can meet that student's special needs;
 - whether there is a closer educational provision which is suitable and can meet a student's special educational needs
 - whether there is evidence that a student will otherwise be unable to attend Post 16 education or training
 - whether distance thresholds have been met
 - any supporting evidence from professionals involved with the student and their family;
 - the best use of the county council's resources

2. Who Is Support Available For?

- 2.1 Where it is not possible to access Post 16 education, for example the nearest school

or college is over 3 miles from the student's home, there is no public transport service, and there is no private transport available, the council may be able to assist with travel. In these circumstances, the student or parents should contact School Transport Eligibility at:

SchoolTransportEligibility@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

- 2.2 Those young people beyond statutory school age who are aged 16 to 19 and have learning difficulties and/or disabilities may receive assisted travel when they attend the **nearest suitable educational placement** to their home address that has an available place and one of the following applies:
- the distance from their home to the educational placement is over 3 miles; or,
 - the distance from their home to the educational placement is less than 3 miles but there is no available walking route; or,
 - it would not be reasonable to expect the young person to walk to the educational placement because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their learning difficulty and/or disability, or because of a temporary or long-term medical condition (evidence is required from a GP or Consultant).
- 2.5 The nearest suitable educational placement is one at which the student's needs can be met. For those with EHCPs, this will be established by the School Transport Eligibility Team from the responses to the formal consultations with schools and colleges undertaken by the SEN Team. If a school or college responds to a consultation stating that need can be met, whether or not it gives reasoning that will establish that it is a suitable establishment. Preference for a particular course or establishment is not relevant to the decision on whether a school or college is considered to be the nearest suitable school or college. In all other cases, the decision of the School Transport Eligibility Team as to suitability of a placement is final and is not open to review.
- 2.6 If a young person attends an educational placement where there is more than one site, travel assistance will only be provided to the nearest of those sites at which the young person's needs can be met. The council will not provide assisted travel between sites. Any dispute over whether the provision at a particular site "meets need" will be determined by confirmation from the School or College as to whether it can meet need at that particular site.
- 2.7 Those who wish to study a course at an alternative educational placement to the nearest one that can meet their needs, will be responsible for the full cost and provision of any travel arrangements that will be required for them to attend.
- 2.8 The transport needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed individually. Therefore, if travel assistance is approved the travel arrangements will be made according to the student's needs, for example, if travel assistance has been agreed and the student is in a residential placement, travel arrangements would be made on a weekly or termly basis.
- 2.8 An officer within the School Transport Eligibility Team is responsible for the assessment of eligibility for travel assistance.
- 2.9 There is a distance related charge for all students with an EHCP who receive travel assistance for taxi transport or travel by rail or public bus service. This is payable

termly in advance of travel and this charge may not be waived by a Stage 1 Review or a Stage 2 Transport Appeal. The charges are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Post 16 Distance Related Charge for Travel by Taxi, Rail or Public Bus Service or other travel provision (subject to change)

Charge	2025/26
Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£182.00 per term (£546.00 per annum)
More than 3 miles from home to school/college	£338.64 per term (£1015.92 per annum)

NB No decision has yet been taken on whether to increase the distance related charge for 2025/26

2.10 Independent travel training for students who face difficulties with transport may be provided on a one-to-one basis depending on the level of need and the availability of trainers. There is no charge for this service.

3. Oxfordshire County Council Spare Seat Scheme for those aged 16-19

3.1 If a young person does not qualify for travel assistance, it may be possible to purchase a seat on home to school transport through the Spare Seat Scheme.

3.2 It may be the case that there is already transport arranged by Oxfordshire County Council from where a student lives for young people who are eligible for free travel to their school or college, and if there is space in the vehicle it may be possible to purchase a seat.

3.3 This is a paid service that is only available on existing transport and where there would be no additional cost for Oxfordshire County Council to add the young person to the journey

3.4 If a student would like to be considered for any place available under the Spare Seat Scheme, they need to submit an application using the following link:
[Paid home to school travel assistance \(spare seats scheme\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

3.5 There is no guarantee that a seat will be available or will continue to be available for the duration of the period of study for a young person. It is important that students consider how they may travel to school or college if this service is not available.

3.6 Seats on coaches provided for home-to-school transport are made available on payment of a distance related charge. The charges for the 2025/26 academic year are set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Post-16 Charges for the Spare Seat Scheme

Spare Seats Scheme Charge	2025/26
Less than 3 miles from home to school/college	£182.00 per term (£546.00 per annum)
More than 3 miles from home to school/college	£338.64 per term (£1015.92 per annum)

NB No decision has yet been taken on whether to increase the distance related charge for 2025/26

3.7 The charge will depend on the distance from a student's home to their school or college. The distance from home to school or college will be measured along the shortest available route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System.

3.8 If there are more requests to pay for seats on a route than there are seats available, they will be allocated in the descending order of priority shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Priority for Spare Seat Scheme

Priority	Category
1	Those with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan naming the school
2	Looked After Children
3	Years 12 and 13 (if there is no available service bus route)
4	Those in receipt of Free School Meals or whose parent or carer is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit
5	Those who travelled on the route the previous term
6	By year group, in ascending order of priority from Reception to Year 11 (or to Year 13 if there is an available service bus route)

** Where there are more applicants than places in any of the above categories, priority will be given to those living closest to the destination school (measured using the shortest available route on Oxfordshire County Council's Geographic Information System)*

4. 16 to 19 Bursary Fund

4.1 To help with funding school and colleges have a fund provided by the government called the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund which is available for students in Post 16 Education and can be used toward the cost of travelling to and from school or college.

4.2 There are two types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- a vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups;
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

4.3 Further information on the 16-19 Bursary Fund is available on Gov.UK web pages at the following link [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/topics/16-to-19-bursary-fund)

4.4 16-19 Bursary funds are managed by schools and colleges. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen institution to make an application.

4.5 Students aged under the age of 19 enrolled on courses for higher education qualifications are not eligible for support.

5. Support for students aged 19-25 (Adult Duty) – Continuing with a first course of study begun before the 19th birthday

5.1 The Transport and Eligibility Team will consider applications for travel assistance made by, or on behalf of, those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged between 19 and 24 years of age (inclusive) if they are continuing with a first course of study begun before their 19th birthday. An assessment will be made taking account of the specific circumstances of the applicant and the case for assistance with travel. Once a student is starting a course of study after their 19th birthday any requests for travel assistance will need to be made to Adult Social Services through an application for a Care Assessment.

5.2 If travel assistance is agreed, it will continue until the end of the agreed course of study, or until the end of the academic year in which the student's 25th birthday occurs, whichever is the sooner. However, travel assistance will be reviewed throughout the course and independent travel will be encouraged.

5.3 More information about Oxfordshire County Council's Local Offer for young people attending education or training can be found here:

[Education and employment for young people | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Further helpful information is contained in the following Moving into Adulthood online Handbook at:

[OxFSN | Moving Into Adulthood](#)

6. Young parents / Care to Learn

6.1 If a student is a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for childcare and related travel costs, up to £160 per child per week, while they are learning. Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- childcare, including deposit and registration fees.
- a childcare 'taster' session (up to 5 days).
- keeping a childcare place over the summer holidays.
- taking the student's child to the childcare provider.

6.2 More detailed information on this and how to apply can be found here:

[Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

7. Types of travel assistance

7.1 Where assistance from the Council is necessary, the Council may consider provision of one of the following forms of travel assistance:

- a public bus or train travel pass
- Independent Travel Training
- a Direct Travel Payment
- a Council arranged coach/bus service
- a Council arranged minibus
- a Council arranged shared taxi
- a Council arranged solo taxi, based on a travel needs assessment

- undertaken by the Council
- Passenger assistant support, based on a travel needs assessment undertaken by the Council
- Other alternative assistance based on needs/circumstances (case by case)

- 7.2 In order to determine the most appropriate travel option for pupils/students and the most cost effective means of travel assistance, the Council will use a range of criteria.
- 7.3 Information on Direct Travel Payment, what they are, what they can be used for, and their values, can be found on our Direct Travel Payment webpage. Banding and values are reviewed annually and updated accordingly to ensure ongoing sustainability and value for money.
- 7.4 The Council operates its own Independent Travel Training Programme (ITT), designed to help young people with special educational needs and/or Disabilities use public transport. The programme helps young people obtain knowledge and experience of a planned route and attain a high level of road safety skills. Assessment for suitability of ITT will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis and reflect the needs/circumstances of the young person. Where it is identified that ITT is not appropriate then it will not be offered and an alternative for of travel will be provided.
- 7.5 The programme provides Individual travel training on a bespoke one-to-one basis with young people. By directly assisting the young people, their families and support networks, the training is tailored to suit the needs of each individual student.

8. Transport Appeals

- 8.1 If a parent disagrees with the decision not to award travel assistance it is possible to appeal. Oxfordshire County Council follows a two-stage appeals process.
- 8.2 The Council has a 2 stage appeal process for young people and parents/carers to challenge a decision about transport eligibility.

Stage 1 – Review by a senior officer/officer panel

- 8.3 Parents/carers have 20 working days to request a review of our decision about home to school transport eligibility or provision. Parents/carers should write to us, detailing why the decision should be reviewed, giving details of any personal/family circumstances and include all supporting evidence to be considered, for example, evidence from a medical professional. In most cases the parent/carer will be asked to complete a form for further information. The parent/carer will receive an acknowledgement when we have received their written request for a review.
- 8.4 The parents/carers of pupils/students should write to the School Transport Eligibility Team using the School Transport Eligibility ‘Contact us’ form.
- 8.5 The decision will be reviewed by a senior officer or via the Transport Exceptions Panel. The Transport Exceptions Panel meet throughout the year and is made up of

officers from Children's Services, the Support Transport team and Integrated SEND teams.

- 8.6 Within 20 working days of receipt of their written request including all supporting evidence, parents/carers will be advised in writing of the appeal decision.

Stage 2 - Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

- 8.7 Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of our Stage 1 appeal decision notification letter to write to ask for it to be reconsidered at Stage 2, which is a review by an Independent Appeal Panel. Details of where to send the Stage 2 request will be included on the Stage 1 appeal decision letter. Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents/carers Stage 2 request, an Independent Appeal Panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent/carer and officers involved in the case. The Independent Appeal Panel will give a detailed written notification of the outcome within 5 working days of the panel meeting.

- 8.8 The Independent Appeal Panel is made up of officers who have experience and knowledge of transport issues. These officers are independent of the original decision making process.

Stage 3 - Complaint to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 8.9 Parents/carers can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman only if they consider that:

- there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules
- if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled

- 8.10 For further information [contact the School Transport Eligibility team.](#)

- 8.11 The LA will not consider requests for a further transport appeal within the same school academic year unless there has been a significant change of circumstance.

- 8.12 Complex Stage 2 cases may take longer than the timescale given above.

9. Useful contact information

9.1 Oxfordshire County Council

School Admissions Team (Transport Eligibility)
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
OX1 1ND
Tel: 0345 241 2487
Email: schooltransporteligibility@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

Supported Transport Services
PO Box 867
Oxford
OX1 9NR

Tel: 01865 323500

Email: mainstream.schooltransport@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Web: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>

9.2 Planning Transport to School/College

The public transport pages on the Oxfordshire County Council website give details of bus routes by parish as well as links to operators' websites and timetables:

www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/public-transport

9.3 Other useful sources of information on public transport

Traveline: <https://www.traveline.info/>

Oxford Bus Company: <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/>

Stagecoach Oxfordshire: <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/about/oxfordshire>

Thames Travel: <https://www.thames-travel.co.uk/>

10. Complaints

Any complaints arising from the processes and procedures set out above should be submitted via the Council's general complaints procedure, details of which are found at:

[Complaints about Oxfordshire County Council | Oxfordshire County Council](#)