



SEND Transport FAQ's and Update August 2022

As you will be aware the new home to school transport policy is now being applied to all families eligible for transport, it is a transitional period which is understandably an unnerving and anxious time for families. We have been working closely with the transport team at Surrey CC, and they have kindly answered some of the frequently asked questions that we have been receiving which we hope will be helpful to you.

The team have also shared the following update:

We are now reviewing transport for 10,000 CYP to over 600 settings this summer, just for a little context on the situation we are in. I know this is no comfort to our families and we have increased resource across the board in the team this year (with 12 new staff) to try and cope with our regular summer rush. I am hopeful that any emails or enquiries being received by the team are being answered in a timely manner.

This is very welcome news, and we hope with the addition of the new staff communication with families will be much quicker which is vital during this transitional period. We will continue to work closely with the transport team and feed your questions and comments into them. Unfortunately, we can't comment on individual cases, but we are very happy to feedback general questions and comments which can be sent to Leanne - leanne.h@familyvoicesurrey.org

The best way to contact the transport team at Surrey CC is via their email address: travel.assistance@surreycc.gov.uk

When will parent carers be told about the transport arrangements for September? (CYP need to be prepared in advance for this)

Unfortunately this year, the usual high number of late applications, together with an increase in the total number of applications received, has meant that the information needed by the transport delivery team is late and not yet complete. The impact is that the timescale for the review of all school transport is now compacted. The team is working incredibly hard to get transport in place as quickly as possible, and families will be notified as this is completed for their CYP. We do understand the need for families to have as much notice as possible to prepare their CYP, but it is not possible at this stage to advise when each school review will be completed.

In light of the driver shortage what notice will be given to families if it is impossible to arrange contracted transport?

Unfortunately this year, the usual high number of late applications, together with an increase in the total number of applications received, has meant that the information needed by the transport delivery team is late and not yet complete. The impact is that the timescale for the review of all school transport is now compacted. Whilst the team is working incredibly hard to get transport in place as quickly as possible, it is not possible at this stage to determine a notice period to families. The situation will be reviewed mid-August, and further information will then be issued.

What about if transport is already in place - what notice will be given if the transport provider can no longer fulfil the route?

Sadly we cannot plan for last minute cancellations of transport and this year we have seen last minute cancellations on a number of occasions. In these events we do try and find an alternative but when there is nothing available, we do offer Independent Travel Allowance as part of our process.

What happens if the driver shortage means that you cannot transport a CYP to their setting and a family cannot get them to that setting?

If, for whatever reason, transport is not able to be provided for the start of term, and the family is not able to take advantage of temporary reimbursement to make their own arrangements, then the SEND service will be informed so that alternative learning options are discussed with the school. The allowance can be used to make whatever arrangements necessary, it does not have to be the parents/carers taking the CYP themselves.

You are encouraging parents to have a travel allowance instead of providing transport - how is the allowance worked out? As it appears that it does not take into account the 4 journeys parents would have to do each day (only allows for 2) and the amount you get per mile is nowhere near the real cost particularly now with the huge rise in fuel costs.

The reimbursement of 2 trips per day is in line with the recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. For fairness and transparency, the mileage rate will be in line with HMRC rates, and will be amended as necessary if rates are increased. We are adhering to the Ombudsman recommendations, and that we have to balance that (and offering more than their guidance) against the huge budget pressure on the transport budget, which is paid for from public funds. Unfortunately, the HMRC rate hasn't been changed due to current fuel prices (and it is not viable for us to put the rate up and down as prices increase and reduce). Some parents undertake the school drop off then go off to work themselves. I do understand that it maybe not viable when they do have to do a return trip. We are always open to discussion on this as we appreciate individual extenuating circumstances will differ from one family to the next.

Now that you are moving away from solo transport what will this mean for my child?

All pupils will be put on shared transport wherever possible, including those that may previously have been on solo routes. If you have any concerns about this and how it will affect your child please do contact us and we will be happy to talk you through it and discuss your concerns.

Post 16 - Why is my Young Person no longer able to get transport? Is the new policy to offer all eligible post 16 a bursary and expect parent carers to take them?

Post 16 travel assistance is a discretionary service, rather than the statutory responsibility of the Council. The focus of the new policy is independence and supporting the transition into adulthood. Under the new policy, the offer to those post 16 students who are eligible for travel assistance is a bursary in the first instance. This can be used to support each young person in any way the young person or the family wishes, it does not necessarily mean the parents have to take them. We are able to offer Independent travel training for those who are eligible to further support their transition to adulthood. Of course we realise that there will be some students who may require assistance beyond the bursary, and the communication that goes out to all eligible post 16 students advises families that they have the right to appeal if they feel that the bursary is not appropriate.

Why can I only claim travel allowance for 3 or 5 days? What happens if there is a 4 day week?

For families who opt to take their own child to school and claim reimbursement, the previous travel allowance scheme is replaced in the new policy by a mileage allowance for 2 trips per day for all the journeys undertaken. This is based on the shortest road distance between home and school and using Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rates, currently 45p per mile. In the former table showing the travel allowance bandings, the 3 and 5 day columns were simply examples of how the allowance would be reduced where travel provided by the families was less than mornings and afternoon 5 days per week. Similarly, for the bursary, the post 16 communication for eligible students uses 3 and 5 day examples of how the bursary will be reduced for less than 5 full days attendance. The bursary will be paid for however many days per week the student attends school or college.