

Staffordshire County Council
Post-16 Transport Policy Statement
2026-27
Draft

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement - Academic Year 2026-27

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

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Introduction

Local authorities do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support. They do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

Young people carrying on their education post 16 must reapply for travel support, even if they received it in the previous academic year. Please note the Raising of the Participation Age has not created any new entitlement to free or subsidised post-16 travel assistance – students are not required just to stay at school or college but can work, volunteer, or take part in an apprenticeship whilst continuing their education.

‘Sixth form age’ refers to those young people who are over 16 years of age but under 19 or continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday (years 12,13,14).

The Council does not make any general arrangements for free transport or the payment of any travelling expenses for adults under section 508F of the Education Act 1996 as it considers that these are unnecessary for the vast majority of adults. In certain circumstances we will support those with an Education, Health and Care Plan until the age of 25 if their course begun before their 19th birthday.

This policy uses the term ‘Post 16’ to include both learners of sixth form age and those with learning difficulties / disabilities up to the age of 25.

Information in this statement is correct as at 18 February 2026

Transport and travel support

Always check all your travel options and consider your journey to and from school or college when choosing where to attend. Receipt of travel assistance in previous years does not guarantee any assistance post 16.

Most students walk or make their own travel arrangements using public transport. For help with planning a journey visit [the Traveline website](#).

For details of bus routes and route maps visit [our bus travel pages](#). Some schools and colleges also operate their own transport – contact them directly for information.

Staffordshire County Council post 16 scheme aims to provide support to those young people who need it the most, such as low income or requiring specialist travel arrangements due to a learning difficulty or disability.

Concessionary tickets for young people 16 – 25 from public bus service providers

Bus companies offer their own passes at competitive prices which may be your cheapest option. To find and buy the public bus ticketing option that best meets your needs please contact [bus operators](#) in your area directly.

The Knot ticket

[The Knot ticket](#) can be used on buses operated by Aimee's Travel, Arriva Midlands, First Potteries, Select Bus, D&G, Chaserider, and National Express West Midlands and covers around 90% of the Staffordshire bus network. It allows unlimited travel all day for £7 on any of those operator's buses within the specified area. The website provides more details of the areas covered.

Stoke on Trent Smart ticket

[The Smart multi-operator bus pass student tickets](#) allows you to travel on buses provided by a number of different operators across Stoke and parts of north Staffordshire with just one ticket.

Smart tickets cannot be used to travel to or from areas outside of the boundary of the scheme, but you can use it to travel up to the boundary and pay the additional fare to your final destination.

Train travel

If you're aged 16 or 17, you can get 50% off standard Anytime, Off Peak, Advance and Season tickets – as many times as you like. A 16-17 Saver

railcard is just £35 and is valid for one year or until your 18th birthday, whichever comes first. For more information visit the [16-17 railcard saver webpage](#).

Travel support from schools and colleges

Schools and colleges may also offer their own transport arrangements. For up-to-date information, prices and application forms contact the school or college directly.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#) provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation, so they can remain in education. A bursary 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
- transport and lunch on days you study or train

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries -

1. Vulnerable groups - You may be able to get a bursary if at least one of the following applies:

- you're in or you recently left local authority care
- you get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- you get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- you get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

The amount you may get depends on the costs you have and what you need for your course. This might include money for books, equipment or travel costs to school or college.

2. A discretionary bursary_- You could get a discretionary bursary if you need financial help but do not qualify for a bursary for students in vulnerable groups. Your education or training provider decides how much you get and what it's used for. Your provider will decide how you get your bursary. You might get an instalment paid by cash, cheque or bank transfer or things like a travel pass, free meals or books. Some

providers also offer one-off payments to cover study trips or travel for university interviews.

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing both types of bursaries. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen school or college to make an application.

Young parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, [Care to Learn](#) can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £180 per child per week, while you're 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 your childcare place over the summer holidays
- taking your child to the childcare provider

The Residential Support Scheme

Whilst not assisting with transport costs the [Residential Support Scheme](#) does provide financial support with accommodation costs for some students (aged between 16 and 19) who need to live away from home to study because their course is not available locally

Residential Bursary Fund

You may be able to get a bursary towards the cost of accommodation from some residential colleges under the [Residential Bursary Fund](#). The college will check if you are entitled, and if so, decide how much you will get.

Local Authority support - Staffordshire post 16 travel assistance

General terms and conditions applying to all post 16 students

- 1- The Staffordshire Post 16 travel assistance scheme is for students who are resident in Staffordshire only. Students living outside of Staffordshire should approach their own local council.
- 2- The course must be funded by the local authority – travel support is not given to students paying fees for their tuition or attending a course as part of a paid apprenticeship.
- 3- Students must be studying full-time (16 hours or more timetabled sessions per week) - the course can be at entry level or at level 1, 2, or 3. Travel assistance is not given to higher education courses (level 4 and above, such as Foundation Degrees or Higher National Diplomas)
- 4- If the nearest suitable learning provider offering the course is in another local authority area, then students will still qualify for assistance providing all other eligibility criteria are met.
- 5- When considering if a course is available, we take into account – the end qualification awarded, not the individual units taken; the learning provider having a place available to offer to you on that course; you meet the entry requirements demanded by that provider; that the location meets any requirements you have as a result of any learning difficulty or disability you may have.
- 6- Students who reach the age of 19 whilst continuing a course remain eligible until the end of that academic year for travel support (different arrangements apply for those with learning difficulties and disabilities please see ‘LA support for Learners with special educational needs or a disability’)
- 7- Suitability of travel support will be determined by us – this will be based upon balancing reasonable costs and reasonable travel/waiting times and enables you to access your main registered learning base during school/college days at their general start/finish times. This could mean that you may not receive travel assistance for the quickest or most convenient transport.

- 8- The contribution rate is fixed regardless of the number of days travelling, the distance travelled or cost to the Council
- 9- For students with a learning difficulty or a disability, the need for specialised transport and the type of transport required due to an inability to walk or use public transport (even if accompanied) will be based upon information obtained from the school, college, or Education, Health and Care Plan and any other appropriate professional(s).
- 10- Students using the scheme are expected to make their own way to the nearest pick up point/bus stop/train station up to 1 mile away from the home address or destination if required (this requirement may be waived due to a student's learning difficulty or disability).
- 11- Any public bus pass issued under this scheme will provide travel at a minimum during term time only between home and your place of learning.
- 12- Travel assistance is not given to attend work placements or work experience.
- 13- We will provide travel assistance from your main home address to your registered base only, to enable attendance for the general start/finish times of the academic day. Travel to other sites or work placements or to and from other addresses, is not covered by this scheme. Travel to your registered base outside standard hours to attend activities that are not essential to passing your course is not covered by this scheme.
- 14- Any travel pass issued under the scheme remains the property of Staffordshire County Council and must be returned if a student leaves school or college. Should you lose your pass a charge will be made for a replacement.
- 15- By making an application for travel assistance, you are making an agreement with the County Council that you will make the required contribution payment. Please be aware that should you fail to keep to this agreement by not making any payment due on time, or any arrangement agreed for payment of arrears is not

maintained, then the assistance we have arranged (including any contracted transport) will be withdrawn following a 4 calendar weeks' notice period, and action will take place to recover any outstanding debt. Additionally, in the following year, the required annual contribution would need to be paid **in full**, and an agreement made to pay any outstanding arrears before travel assistance is arranged. If this doesn't take place, travel assistance may take the form of a payment of a mileage-based payment towards the cost of you making your own travel arrangements (usually paid in arrears), with the required annual contribution for that year deducted from the amount paid to you. We may also deduct any outstanding arrears for the previous academic year from the mileage payments.

- 16- Unacceptable behaviour such as fighting, bullying or foul language whilst using transport may result in the pass being withdrawn. Parents will be held responsible for any damage caused and may be charged for it.
- 17- It can take up to 20 working days for the pass to be issued. Claims for payment of travel costs before 20 working days after receipt of your payment and photographs where applicable will not be accepted. No backdated claims for payment will be accepted. If a travel allowance/budget is being paid, we will confirm to you in writing the date that payment will commence.
- 18- However long your course is, you must make a new application for travel assistance each year unless otherwise advised.
- 19- You must notify the Authority if you change address or your course of study.
- 20- If you have any dispute regarding our decisions, please follow appeals process

Support for all students who are capable of walking or using public transport (accompanied as necessary) – known as the 'post 16 support scheme'

Support is offered to a student meeting the general terms and conditions and -

- Who meets the low-income criteria. A low income is where the student or their parent is in receipt of a benefit that leads to the receipt of free school meals (the full criteria can be found at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) or where the family receive the maximum amount of working tax credit ('deduction due to income' will be 0.00 on your tax credit award notice) **and**
- Is studying at the nearest suitable school, college or Local Authority funded learning provider offering the course, or catchment school, which is between 3 and 15 miles away

In return for a contribution of £645 towards the cost, we will provide a pass for public transport or a seat (if one is available and can legally be sold) on an existing route contracted either by Staffordshire County Council, the school or the college. The price is reviewed each year and can be paid in instalments.

Students may be required to travel up to one mile to or from the pickup/drop off point to complete your journey

For information, the average gross cost per student to Staffordshire County Council of providing travel assistance for the academic year 2024-25 was £1357 for a student attending a mainstream school

LA support for Learners with special travel needs due to special educational needs or a disability

The following applies for students with special educational needs or a disability in addition to the general terms and conditions -

- Have their 19th birthday on or after 1 September 2026 or continuing a course begun before the day of their 19th birthday (see definition) **and**
- Their learning difficulty or disability prevents them from walking to school or college or from using public transport, even if accompanied (the parent/carer is responsible for making any necessary arrangements for this) **and**
- The student is attending the Local Authority defined nearest suitable school, college or Local Authority funded training provider offering the course as specified and named in the Education, Health

and Care Plan, regardless of the distance to travel. Should you have any query regarding the establishment named within the EHCP, please contact your Key Worker.

If a student is eligible for support, in return for a contribution of £816 (or £645 for low-income students) the necessary travel assistance would be provided (this may be in the form of payment of a Personal Travel Assistance Budget to enable you to make your own travel arrangements). A low income is where the student or their parent is in receipt of a benefit that leads to the receipt of free school meals (the full criteria can be found at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals) or where the family receive the maximum amount of working tax credit ('deduction due to income' will be 0.00 on your tax credit award notice). We may decide to provide travel assistance through the offer of a personal travel budget and the student/family will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements.

For information the average gross cost per student to Staffordshire County Council of providing travel assistance for the academic year 2024-25 was -

- £9194 for a student with learning difficulties and disabilities attending a school
- £10,790 for a student with learning difficulties and disabilities attending a college

Students with an Education, Health and Care Plan starting a new course over the age of 19

In addition to the conditions for students with an EHCP under the age of 19, the following also applies to students with an Education, Health and Care plan beginning a new course over the age of 19 and under the age of 25. An assessment will be made as to why it is necessary for the council to make travel arrangements. The decision is based upon information provided by the parent/carer and previously provided within any Social Care and Health Assessment or Education, Health and Care Plan. We will consider, amongst other things –

- What other arrangements you have considered or tried and why they are not suitable.

- If there is a family member/carer who is able to transport the student and why it would not be a reasonable arrangement to make.
- If the student is in receipt of higher rate mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance, the purpose of which is to assist those who have mobility problems, with severe difficulty walking or who need help getting around outside. We would normally expect this benefit to be fully utilised and if there are any factors limiting its' use you should provide details of them.
- If there is a 'Motability' vehicle which the student may or may not be driver. If a decision has been made to not use the 'Motability' vehicle to support the student to reach their education placement, we would normally expect the carer/student to make their own appropriate alternative arrangements or provide details as to why that is not possible/reasonable.
- Any other exceptional circumstances that you consider need to be taken into account and consider any supporting evidence that you provide.
- Please note that we would not generally consider work or childcare commitments on their own as an exceptional reason for travel assistance to be provided.
- Should it be deemed necessary for the authority to arrange a vehicle for travel assistance support there will be no charge to the student. However, if support is agreed is via the payment of a mileage allowance or personal travel budget, a contribution is required towards the cost at the same rate as for those under the age of 19.

What is a new course and what is a continuing course?

Our definition of a new course is one where the named qualification, learning aims, outcomes, unit/course code or title of the course differ to the previous year. For example, an A level in maths delivered over 2

years (the qualification being awarded only at the end of completion of the second year) is considered a continuing course.

Where a student follows a programme of study such as a level 1 course the first year, and progresses on to the level 2 the next, or completes a series of courses where the outcomes differ each year and there is no requirement to progress to the second or further years to successfully complete each year, this is not considered a continuing course.

Refunds

Should you leave your course and require a refund you must return your pass to Transport & the Connected County. Refunds will not be made until the pass has been received. An administration fee of £10 may be deducted.

Support for students who live in rural areas

The county council provides financial support to a limited number of local bus services and encourages operators to publish timetables that are suitable for school/college start and finish times. Where public transport is available, purchasing travel passes on public transport or buying into transport arranged by a school or college themselves, may be your cheapest option.

Good practice from the Department for Education suggests that students may reasonably be expected to travel up to 75 minutes each way. Travel time includes time spent walking to/from stops, waiting times, driving, travelling on college or school-arranged transport, and using public transport or trains (or a combination of these). The 75 minutes does not include the waiting time between arrival at school/college and the general school/college start and end time.

Students with a journey time of over 75 minutes may be eligible for assistance. This is in addition to the options and support detailed elsewhere in this statement and is available to all students (low income or not) but will be of less benefit to those in urban areas.

If you wish to apply under these grounds, please provide supporting information you wish to be considered to make your case, for example, the rural nature of your home address and how this affects your journey

and why you or your parents/carers are not able to make your own travel arrangements.

If we agree to assist, this would generally be in the form of a payment of a mileage allowance per day attended for the journey from home to the nearest appropriate bus/train stop, plus provision of a public bus pass or passes. A contribution towards the cost would be required at the same rate as detailed in our post 16 transport statement (for 2026-27 this would be annual fee of £816 for non-low income students, reduced to £645 for low-income students).

Applications for support under exceptional circumstances

Applications can be made for travel assistance outside the policy, based upon individual, exceptional circumstances. Should you wish to apply on this basis please make an application using the online form and provide full details of -

- what you consider are your exceptional individual circumstances and why you consider those circumstances require assistance from the County Council;
- why you or your parents/carers are not able to make your own travel arrangements;
- all other relevant supporting information you wish to be considered to make your case (for example the rural nature of your home address and how this affects your journey, supporting medical evidence for those seeking support due to medical needs).

Please note, in all cases we do not generally consider work, other childcare commitments, or parental convenience alone as an exceptional reason alone to provide assistance. We also generally do not provide assistance if the learning provider is less than 3 miles and more than 15 miles from the home address (the distance will be measured by Staffordshire County Council using the shortest driving route avoid toll roads using Google maps). The upper and lower distance criteria may be varied due to the needs of the student's learning difficulties or disability.

Travel training

Staffordshire County Council is committed to enabling its residents to become as independent as possible. To this end, the County Council offers [Independent Travel Training](#). This is a lifelong skill which can have positive impacts beyond the home to school or college journey. It promotes independence and choice, develops confidence and social skills and it opens up further education and employment opportunities. Training is tailored to the skills and the pace of the individual.

The Travel Trainers work in partnership with schools and parents/carers to enable the individual to achieve their goals. Travel Training involves route planning, using a variety of travel options, road and personal safety, dealing with emergencies and applying for the appropriate travel pass. For more information, please speak to your child's school or college or email the Travel Training team at independent.traveltraining@staffordshire.gov.uk

Apprenticeships

Staffordshire does not offer any specific travel assistance for apprenticeship or traineeship students. Please contact your learning provider or work placement for more information.

Supported internships

Students may be eligible for assistance under our post 16 schemes to the main registered base of the learning establishment only, at the same cost as detailed above. However, we would not offer travel assistance to the work placement – you should ask the employer or your training provider if they can help.

Those not in education, employment or training (NEET)

No specific arrangements are made directly by the Council for students who are NEET. [Local bus companies](#) offer a range of passes and should be contacted directly for further information.

LA support for required to board at their learning provider

Travel assistance may be available under the Staffordshire Post 16 travel assistance scheme if there are special reasons why they need to attend and board at a learning provider further away from home. For eligible students we will offer travel assistance between your home address and your accommodation general location on the same basis as to which the placement funding has been agreed (e.g. termly boarding, weekly boarding, 38 weeks placement) providing all other eligibility criteria are met.

Applying for LA travel support

Students must make a new application each year, even if they received travel assistance in the previous year, unless they have been advised otherwise by the County Council. Details of how and when to apply will be available [from our website](#) . You should submit all necessary supporting evidence you wish to be considered along with your application (including professional supporting evidence of any disability which prevents the student from accessing public transport applying for assistance under those grounds).

Appeals

The Local Authority has adopted a 2-stage review and appeals process for those both under and over 16. There are different forms for [students with an Education, Health and Care Plan \(EHCP\)](#) and [mainstream students who do not have an EHCP](#).

Should the two-stage process be completed and be unsuccessful, no further reviews or appeals will be held during that academic year unless there had been a material change of circumstances or further new supporting evidence is being provided.

Please note the responsibility to supply any supporting information for an application or review/appeal rests with the applicant. This will include information from outside agencies, which the applicant feels supports their request.

The timings for the process below are recommended and not compulsory. Whilst we aim to respond as quickly as we can, the timings for responses may be extended if additional time is required to gather supporting information or delayed by school/college holidays. Whilst the review and appeal process takes place you remain responsible for arranging and funding your own travel as you feel is necessary.

You can appeal against an individual travel assistance decision based on:

- Eligibility under the post 16 travel scheme
- Transport arrangements offered
-

The responsibility to supply any supporting information for an application, review or appeal rests with the applicant. This will include information from outside agencies, which the applicant feels supports their request. However, if the parent can demonstrate that they are reasonably unable to do this, then the authority can take steps to try to locate this itself to ensure it has access to this information, but this may cause a delay in dealing with your appeal. Please be aware the authority but may be limited as to what information it can obtain due to the Data Protection Act.

Stage 1 - review by a senior officer

To request a stage 1 review against a decision please complete (within 20 working days of your refusal) [the online review request form](#) and attach all your additional supporting information you wish to be considered.

Your review request should explain why you consider the decision is wrong and present sufficient evidence to support your position, including any exceptional circumstances relevant at the time of your previous or present application.

Review or appeal requests will be considered applying our published data protection and fair processing notice.

A senior officer will review your case, considering if the law and policy have been properly applied and consider any exceptional circumstances you have outlined. We aim to make a stage 1 review decision within 20 working days and include within the decision letter:

- 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
- How to escalate your case to stage 2 (if appropriate).
-

Stage 2 - Review by an Independent Appeal Panel

Parents have 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage 1 written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage 2. Within 40 working days of receipt of the request an independent appeal panel will consider the case. Parents will also be given the opportunity to make a verbal representation to the panel if they wish.

Within 5 working days of the panel meeting, a response will be provided setting out:

- The nature of the decision reached
- How the review was conducted (including the standard followed)
- 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
- Information about your right to put the matter to the [local government ombudsman](#).
-

The above period of 5 working days will be reasonably extended where the panel consider it is necessary to gather further information after the panel meeting was held.

The independent appeal panel members will be independent of the original decision-making process and ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of the parents and the local authority's duty. Please note that if you have been unsuccessful, further review and appeal requests would not be accepted by the Authority in the same academic year unless there has been a significant material change in your circumstances or you are able to provide new supporting information for consideration.

Local government ombudsman

If at stage 2 the decision not to provide travel assistance is upheld, you will be informed of your right of complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, but only if you consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled. If you consider the decision of the independent appeal panel to be flawed on public law grounds, you may also apply for judicial review.

Days and times the different pass types can be used

Students who have been issued a public bus pass under the Staffordshire County Council post 16 travel assistance scheme are normally limited to travel on school days only. Passes issued for a seat on a contracted vehicle are limited to the one morning and one afternoon journey to and from school during term time. Any travel between sites during the day is not covered by the scheme, but the school or college may be able to offer assistance.

Passes purchased directly from public service operators, schools and colleges will have different arrangements regarding costs, timings and how and when to apply, and they should be contacted directly for more information.

People with certain disabilities are eligible for a bus pass which provides free public bus travel at any time within Staffordshire, and between 9.30am and 11pm weekdays or all day at weekends and bank holidays outside of Staffordshire. Anyone who is eligible for a disabled person's bus pass, but who cannot travel unassisted may also be able to get a 'companion pass'. This will allow their carer to travel free with them within the Staffordshire County Council area. Please visit the [disabled person's concessionary bus pass webpage](#) for further information.