



School Travel Assistance Policy Consultation 2024 Information Pack

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Introduction

Cumberland Council is seeking residents' and stakeholders' views on proposed policy changes related to school travel assistance.

This information pack has been developed to support the consultation on the proposed school travel policy changes.

The proposed School Travel Policy (the Policy) sets out the legal responsibilities that the Council has in order to provide assistance with transport to school or another education setting for children living in the local authority area.

The Council understands that some children's needs will mean they will always require travel assistance. The Council, regardless of any decisions made, will continue to meet its statutory requirements in relation to home to school travel.

The Council is required by law to consult on any changes to its Home to School Travel Policy.

If approved, changes to the Policy will be applied to new applications for transport from September 2025.

The consultation is open from 21 October 2024 and closes at 5 pm on 9 December 2024.

Background and context

Cumberland Council is considering ways to arrange more flexible school travel arrangements for children that better respond to their changing needs, service demands and external market pressures. Following a series of parental engagement sessions and review of the current policies, processes and practices, several proposals have been developed which we believe will provide greater choice, independence and control for children and families in Cumberland, helping to improve outcomes, as well as supporting the Council to save money. The engagement sessions with parents were held in order to test our early thinking and to get vital input from parents to shape the proposed changes to the Policy.

We believe that the proposed amendments to the to the School Travel Assistance Policy will provide greater equity, clarity, and ease of understanding for those considering or applying for transport. This proposed Policy will also assist in ensuring service sustainability and be in line with the Council's ambitions for the green agenda and the work being undertaken by the Council to deliver better value for money in its services.

In addition, the Council proposes updating its School Travel Assistance Policy to better reflect the most recent statutory guidance which was updated in January 2024. The Department for Education statutory guidance Travel to school for children of compulsory school age can be found here: [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1181117/Travel-to-school-for-children-of-compulsory-school-age-2024.pdf)

It should be noted that the changes proposed to the policy do not reduce eligibility for assistance with travel to school. The proposals are designed to provide added flexibility in the way the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities and are aimed at ensuring the service continues to be sustainable and resilient into the future. Furthermore, the provision of options such as independent travel training could reduce costs overall whilst supporting young people in their transition into adulthood. Broadly, the proposals should reduce expenditure, enhance the service, and better support children and young people.

Please Note: References to “parent” in this document include birth parents, adoptive parents, foster parents, carers or legal guardians with parental responsibility. References to “child” or “children” in this document includes all children and young people from 0 -18 years (and young people up to 25 years where the young person has a disability).

Cumberland Council’s approach to engagement and consultation

When a local authority proposes changes to their school travel policy that may affect children’s eligibility for transport, the local authority should consult for a minimum of 28 working days during term time. The statutory guidance states that wherever possible, **local authorities should phase in changes so that children who begin attending a school under one set of travel arrangements continue to benefit from those arrangements until they leave that school.**

We are undertaking this consultation in line with the principles and standards set out in the Cumberland Council Community Engagement Framework. This approach aims to:

- Reach more people, giving everyone a voice - especially those we seldom hear from.
- Strengthen existing connections with communities and stakeholders, and establish new ones, to support ongoing conversations.
- Seek community and stakeholder views and aspirations to create a rich source of insight.
- Incorporate that insight into decision-making processes, confident that it is representative.
- Establish an ongoing partnership with the community to ensure its priorities and values continue to shape services.
- Increase levels of trust and ownership among our communities.

Feedback from the engagement sessions

During parent engagement sessions, it was highlighted that there is a current lack of options for school travel. Parents also fed back that the administrative burden associated with having a child with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can already be overwhelming, without the additional burdens that can be experienced when arranging school travel. Parents emphasised that any new transport arrangements should be administratively light and straightforward to manage. This feedback has been incorporated into our planning process to ensure that proposed options for school travel assistance are designed to minimise paperwork and bureaucracy for families.

Why your views are important

It is important to the Council that the views of parents and children who may be affected by the proposals are carefully considered to ensure that the service continues to meet the needs of its users. Feedback is also sought from Cumberland residents and other interested stakeholders.

The findings of the consultation will be shared with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Corporate Functions and presented to Cumberland Council Cabinet on 18 February 2025. Feedback will help to inform any decision by the Council on the proposed changes to the School Travel Assistance Policy and how travel assistance is delivered.

How to Have Your Say

You are invited to give your views on the proposed changes to the School Transport Assistance policy. You can do this by using the online response form at:

www.cumberland.gov.uk/HaveYourSay

The Information Pack and Response Form are also available to download and print from the consultation webpage. Easy read versions are also available.

If you require a paper copy of the Information Pack or the Response Form or if you have any queries about the consultation, please email HaveYourSay@cumberland.gov.uk with 'School Transport Policy consultation 2024' as the subject.

The consultation is open from 21 October 2024 and closes at 5pm on 9 December 2024. Please note that responses received after this date will not be considered as part of the consultation.

Our data: Privacy Notice

Cumberland Council is seeking your views, comments, and information about you in order to inform a decision on proposed changes to the Policy for home to school travel assistance in Cumberland. This information is being collected for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest in the exercise of official authority vested in the Council.

Responses will be used to understand what people think about, and the perceived impact of the potential changes to the Policy for School Travel Assistance in Cumberland, and to look at the views of different groups within Cumberland. All data will remain within the UK and will only be shared with third parties where they are undertaking data processing on behalf of Cumberland Council. Personal information will be held securely for one year, after which it will be deleted or destroyed.

You have some legal rights in respect of the personal information we collect from you. Please see our website – [Cumberland.gov.uk/Privacy](https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/Privacy) for further details.

You can contact the Council's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@cumberland.gov.uk If you have a concern about the way we are collecting or using your personal data, you should raise your concern with us in the first instance or directly to the Information Commissioner's Office.

Cumberland Home to School Transport Service

Cumberland Council provides daily home to school transport to circa 5,202 children to 125 different schools and education settings and provides 414 registered service bus passes. This includes 530 separate commercial routes utilising 75 different contracted suppliers through a mix of buses, coaches, people carriers and taxis. In addition, the in-house Transport Operational Team transports a further 146 SEND pupils across 18 routes and 13 mainstream pupils on 1 route.

Broadly, and as might be expected, the largest number of routes is associated with secondary schools serving rural areas, and specialist provision in special schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), which are few in number and, therefore, serve a very wide geographical area. It is special schools and PRUs where children are more likely to travel alone, or in small groups.

Many of the children using the service have requirements related to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The service also supports eligible children without SEND, in line with statutory requirements.

Information on the School Transport Service, eligibility criteria, and the application process is available at: <https://www.cumberland.gov.uk/schools-and-education/apply-school-transport>

Statutory framework for school transport and travel

School travel is an integral part of the school system. It ensures no child of compulsory school age is prevented from accessing education by a lack of transport or the cost of transport.

The cost of delivering free school travel has increased significantly in recent years and it is important that local authorities take travel costs into account when planning the supply of school places. Capital expenditure, revenue costs and travel costs need to be considered together to ensure financial sustainability.

The legislative framework for home to school travel is set out within:

Section 508A of the Education Act 1996 (a general duty is imposed on local authorities to assess the school travel needs of their area and to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel).

Section 508B of the Education Act provides a statutory duty on local authorities to provide home to school travel arrangements for “eligible children”. Eligible children are defined in Schedule 35B of the Act; to qualify as an "eligible child", the child must be of compulsory school age (5-16).

In addition to the Education Act, there is statutory guidance for local authorities covering travel to school for children of compulsory school age you can find this here:

[Travel to school for children of compulsory school age \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk)

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. This means they must take all actions necessary to enable their child to attend school. For most parents, this includes making arrangements for their child to travel to and from school.

Local authorities must make arrangements, free-of-charge, for eligible children to travel to school. There are also extended rights to free travel to school for children from low-income households. Local authorities are also responsible for deciding what travel arrangements to make, provided they are suitable for the needs of the children for which they are made.

Local authorities school travel policies should be easy for parents to find and understand and should have a fair and transparent process so that parents can appeal a decision about travel to school for their child.

Local authorities must provide and publicise a school travel policy, an up-to-date version of which must be made available by 19 September each year, so that parents may take it into account when deciding which schools to apply for during the normal school admissions round.

The statutory responsibility for transport for 16–19-year-olds (who have started a course before their 19th birthday) rests with local authorities but includes some local discretion as to what measures are implemented. Local authorities have a duty to review, prepare and publish an annual 16-19 travel policy statement by 31 May specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or otherwise, that the local authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

At present, the law is different in relation to school travel based on the differing ages of children and whether they are of compulsory school-age. Local authorities have a number of legal duties and powers related to school travel assistance, including a duty under Section 508A Education Act 1996 to promote sustainable modes of travel.

Children and young people are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday (or from their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August, 31 December or 31 March) until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they reach 16 years of age.

Current Cumberland Home to School Travel Assistance Policies and what parents have told us

The Council currently has a number of policies that relate to school travel assistance. We have reviewed these current policies and listened to parents' views on the policies and school more generally during engagement sessions. The key messages include:

- The need for simpler school travel policies that were easier to understand.
- The need to better promote independence for children and promote more sustainable modes of travel.
- The importance of reducing travel times where possible, reflecting the impact of long distances on children's readiness to learn, school attendance and behaviour.
- Being clearer about the overall school travel assistance 'offer', such as Personal Travel Budgets and Independent Travel Training and having more information included for parents.
- Having hyperlinks to various parts of the policy, such as the appeals process, to make it easier to follow.
- Having an easy to read, parent friendly version of policy.
- The limited choices of types of school travel assistance currently available, with the options being a bus pass for use on a public service route, parental mileage rate or the use of a vehicle commissioned by the Council.
- The possible benefits of having personal travel budgets or independent travel training where this is suitable for children and parents.

Transformation of School Travel Assistance

Pressures on budgets and increasing demand for services has prompted many councils to review the provisions in their school travel assistance policies. Typically, this is part of a wider transformation programme relating to SEND and education, in recognition of the close connections across these areas. For those councils that have been successful in consistently reducing levels of spend on school travel this is through a combination of activities, including: managing demand and maximising the

independence of children and young people; improving policy, strategy, IT systems and processes; more efficient provision and commissioning, and cultural and behavioural change.

Cumberland Council has determined a proactive strategic and operational response to these challenges. The Cumberland Council Plan 2023-2027 sets out the ambitions for the Council in five strategic themes, with the reform of home to school transport included within the addressing inequality's theme, recognising that inequality is a significant challenge for Cumberland and continues to hold people back from reaching their true potential. This is often the experience of families of children with special educational needs and disabilities. The Council is prioritising reforming school transport provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities to promote independent and active travel, and as part of this, is looking to work in co-production with schools, parents/carers and the supply chain to review the current school transport policies. This will help equip young people with the necessary skills to navigate their communities safely and support their transition to adulthood, future employment, and overall well-being.

Within this strategic framework, the Cumberland Transformation Programme has set the vision of achieving long-term financial sustainability and delivering high performing services for residents through the implementation of an effective operating model.

The rationalisation and refresh of our current school transport policies is a key element in this transformation and needs to be undertaken in a manner which enables a local approach. In this refresh, we are focusing on:

- Getting the basics right by clearly explaining what our statutory duties are, what parents, carers and adults can expect from us and signposting for those not eligible for these services so that we offer 'something for everyone'.
- Supporting children and families to solve problems and promote social responsibility by offering a range of travel assistance options.
- Believing in, and challenging our service users by encouraging independence, for example by expanding travel training, increasing the offer of personal transport budgets, and offering spare seats to those who are not eligible but who may benefit from them for a contribution.

Developing our new Home to School Travel Assistance Policy

The policy has been developed based on the following principles:

- Commitment to ensuring all children can fulfil their potential and that all children with significant special educational needs or disabilities should lead lives that are as independent and as free from restriction as possible.
- Promoting inclusive opportunities to enable children to travel to and from school or college independently or using family-based approaches similar to their age and needs.

- Promoting sustainable, safe, healthy and appropriate travel solutions by working in partnership with parents to support them with their legal responsibility to make sure their children attend school.
- A commitment to equality of opportunity, the celebration of diversity and an opposition to all forms of discrimination; and
- Efficient use of public resources, delivering better outcomes and providing better value for money.

The key principles in the proposed policy are consistent with the findings of the Joint Area SEND revisit in Cumbria in December 2022 and reflect national good practice and the latest statutory guidance. Our proposed policy also offers an opportunity to ensure that the clarity of the offer is in line with the transparency required across the SEND system, for example, with regard to parent and carer faith and trust in the area's ability to improve, to respond to budgetary challenges and to improve area-wide partnership outcomes for children.

The proposed policy and consultation process provides the opportunity to:

- Consider future anticipated demand across Cumberland.
- Better plan transport options, reduce travel times, build and move provision in line with the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and inform any future commissioning and procurement process.
- Work with transport and travel providers to understand how we can do more to further improve the logistics of the service.
- Take into account the green transport agenda and emission reductions in line with the Council's clean air strategy.
- Work differently with children, young people, parents, schools and education settings and transport and travel providers.

Existing travel commitments are always key considerations when reviewing any policy changes. The statutory guidance for Travel to school for children of compulsory school age clarifies the position for school travel policies: *'wherever possible, local authorities should phase in changes so that children who begin attending a school under one set of travel arrangements continue to benefit from those arrangements until they leave that school.'* **The proposal is therefore to honour existing commitments for transport and the revised policy amendments will apply only to new applications for home to school transport. Some parents may, however, wish to explore using the alternative approaches that will form part of the revised policy.**

When the Council assesses eligibility for students entering post-16 education and training for travel assistance, particular attention will be paid to the following criteria:

- Whether the student is currently in receipt of any funding from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund and to what value.
- The location of the sixth form unit or college the student would like to attend. If this is not a local provision, the Council would need to know that the course being taken is not available locally.

- Whether the sixth form unit is an extension to the school previously attended by the student and named in their EHCP.
- The distance from the student's home to their education or training establishment and the journey time.
- Whether the young person has SEND and/or mobility difficulties which would impede their access to their educational placement, either independently or otherwise, for example, a wheelchair user.
- Whether the young person has SEND which would make it unsafe for them to travel independently.
- Whether the public transport journey to the nearest suitable placement is too complex for the young person to be expected to travel independently.

The main proposed policy changes are:

- Combining the policies into a single 0-25 years' policy.
- Clearer wording for eligibility criteria and the assessment process.
- Putting in place a range of options available for school travel assistance.
- Putting in place a clearer appeal process for all age groups.
- Setting out areas where the Council may charge for services.
- Increasing the financial contribution requested from parents/carers of children and young people who are not of compulsory school age or who are accessing transport through the 'spare seats scheme' to more accurately reflect the actual cost.
- Clarifying the circumstances when travel assistance will be provided for children who are below compulsory school age.
- Setting out the Council's policy in relation to travel assistance for young adults over the age of 19.
- Strengthening the emphasis on independent travel training and alternative modes of travel to support outcomes within the EHCP.
- An increased emphasis on the use of Personal Transport Budgets.
- Greater clarity of the application process and eligibility for parents (what we will and won't do).
- Greater clarity concerning the rights and responsibilities of parents towards accompanying their children to school.
- Greater clarity around the factors that will be relevant to the decision whether to offer travel assistance – this includes exceptional circumstances.

The objective of all the proposed school travel assistance policy is to enable people to have more choice and control by accessing general travel services where possible. In the drafting of the policies, the Council has considered the lessons learned from councils that have completed their policy review processes and paid due regard to lessons from the latest Local Government Ombudsman reports into school transport decisions, best and local practice for home to school travel.

We believe that the proposed School Travel Assistance Policy provides more choice, independence and control for families, and a number of improvements to existing ways of working by:

- Considering the introduction of a more comprehensive, but appropriately costed, Spare Seat Offer; this enables parents of children not eligible for Council funded travel assistance or adults accessing services to purchase a spare seat on a Council funded vehicle if available.
- Introducing independent travel training for all ages; by starting this with our young people we can, where possible, bring more independence to their lives both during the week when attending school and beyond, providing the skills to access future employment and become less dependent.
- Explaining how safe walking routes to schools are assessed.
- Guidance on services accessing private lanes or unadopted roads.
- Guidance where parents/carers are not at home.
- Ensuring that travel assistance remains in place should there be a local change of home address for children in Year 6 and Year 11, for example, to minimise disruption during important exam years.
- Increasing the efficiency of the systems, for example, introducing online forms to enable online applications, automated eligibility checks and decision-making, the issue by email of passes which can be printed at home (or downloaded onto a mobile device), making sure that information is collected and stored in one place and, where applicable, mileage claims.

The proposals in this consultation

The following changes are being proposed:

Proposal One: Public Transport Travel Pass

This is a free pass for use on public transport. This may also be provided for a parent or another travel buddy to support the child to access education.

Proposal Two: Supported public transport

It may be possible for a child to travel on public transport if the child has some assistance. Where parents are unable to accompany their son or daughter, the Council may provide a passenger assistant, befriending service or a travel buddy.

Proposal Three: Escorted walking / 'walking-bus' or cycling

A one-off payment may be made when a child or young person, who is eligible for support under the Council's policy, would like to use or uses a bicycle to travel to school. This solution can also include a programme of independent travel training to ensure the child or young person is able to safely cycle to and from school if required. A child or young person may be allocated a space on a walking bus scheme. These involve several children and young people walking to and from school under the

guidance and support of a passenger assistant. These carbon neutral approaches would reduce vehicle journeys and congestion around schools and contribute to improving health and wellbeing.

Proposal Four: Independent Travel Training

At present, eligible children and young people with SEND are transported to educational settings by transport arranged by the Council. The current Cumberland Council policy has no option for ITT and does not currently offer support or training to prepare children with SEND for more independent travel.

The focus of ITT is to support independence and the use of public transport.

Children with SEND will be offered training on travelling from home to their school or other place of education where this is deemed beneficial to the child, and where the child may be capable of travelling independently to their place of education, and in support of preparation for approaching adulthood. It is proposed that this will be through a training and support model for children with SEND, (and their parents, schools and education settings)

The training and support programme will introduce important life skills for learners who will go on to benefit from improved independence for the rest of their lives. It is important that families can have confidence in the practice and support of trainers and that children are able to learn at their own pace until such time as they are safe to travel independently using public transport. This proposal may also include the use of designated pick-up and drop-off locations. Another consideration to be made is the need for possible reassessment following any change to education settings.

The DfE statutory guidance for travel to school for children of compulsory school age recognises that for many children learning to travel independently is an important part of preparing for adulthood and would help them lead fulfilling adult lives. Independent Travel Training is provided in many local authorities such as Lincolnshire, Devon, Essex and Kent. Cumberland Council would like to bring services offered in line with DfE guidance and other local authorities.

From the Autumn Term 2025, the Council would start to identify children with SEND who might benefit from this service and would engage with schools and parents about the possible involvement of children, subject to assessment. It is difficult to make a final estimate until the full planning of the service is completed but initial estimates are that fewer than five children per year would be suitable for Independent Travel Training.

Implementation of ITT will also require some changes to our operational service in order to ensure regular reviews with parents and children about travel support, e.g. as part of the EHCP Annual Review, and detailed planning with schools to consider whether some pupils could benefit from other travel assistance options, including personal travel budget (PTBs)/parental grants and ITT. This will help to ensure that full consideration is given to ensuring successful implementation.

Parents would not be obliged to agree to Independent Travel Training for their child.

It is recognised that for the majority of children with SEND it would not be suitable to offer Independent Travel Training, with the expectation that they travel to their place of education independently.

Therefore, there would be no change in arrangements for the majority of children with SEND who are currently receiving transport arranged by the Council.

Where parents agree to an offer of Independent Travel Training for their child, travel arrangements offered to their child may change after their training has been completed to reflect their improved ability to travel to school independently.

Proposal Five: Reimbursement of mileage

Parents of eligible children may be able to support their child in travelling either in the capacity of an escort on a commissioned vehicle or using their own vehicle if the eligible child has access to their own car. In such circumstances the Council may remunerate the costs of travel by paying a mileage allowance. Reimbursement of mileage will also be given for cycling and wheeling for those who use this method of travel.

A likely mileage rate is £0.45 per mile, based on four journeys per day.

Proposal Six: Personal Transport Budgets (PTB)

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) will be available for parents to allow them to make suitable travel arrangements for transport for their child, where this will be more suitable and cost effective than the Council arranging this transport.

The PTB will be a sum of money paid to parents of eligible children with special educational needs and/or a disability who qualify for free school transport, as an alternative to Council commissioned transport. A PTB will enable parents to decide how their child gets to and from school or college and make arrangements which best suit their child's needs. Payments will be made to parents who will get paid a sum of money each month and this payment will not impact on any other benefits they may get. If the person is aged 19 - 25 and entitled to a PTB, this will usually be paid directly to the young person. PTBs can be used to support more independent travel in a number of creative ways, such as:

- Buying a travel pass for public transport for the child and their parent/buddy.
- Paying someone to walk or cycle to school with the child.
- Being driven to school or college by the child's parent or someone chosen by the child or their parent.
- Arranging shared travel, such as car or taxi sharing with another family.
- Overcome other barriers that may be preventing the child from getting to school, for example parents may need to get to work before transport arrives.
- Paying a travel buddy to help the child to use public transport.

There are some situations where a child's needs or circumstances mean that suitable transport is difficult to find, or not available at all, in the local operator market. For example, this may be because a child requires an adapted vehicle that is not available locally, or they require skilled support tailored to their individual needs. The current Policy does not make provision for the Council to offer flexible transport options, such as a transport budget, that could provide a better and safer option for

transporting the child. Introducing a PTB would offer a flexible option for families to make suitable travel arrangements tailored to a child or young person's needs.

Many other local authorities make provision within their Policies for PTBs to be provided in exceptional circumstances. If approved, this proposed change would bring the Council's School Transport Policy in line with other local authorities in being able to offer a PTB where appropriate.

If this proposal is agreed, Personal Transport Budgets would be offered to parents where it is the most appropriate option from that point onwards.

In situations where the Council felt that a PTB would be a more suitable means of arranging transport to school, the School Transport Service would discuss this possibility with parents.

Options for PTB will be developed through co-production with families, schools, and other stakeholders. This will include developing clear eligibility criteria, for greater use of PTB and grants, with an underpinning philosophy and way of working that is strengths based and promotes independence from the very start, designed to take into account the Cumberland geography and wider context.

A Parent's Information Guide to PTB and parental grants will also be developed, in partnership with parents and the Parent Carer Forum, and made available on the Council's website and via the Local Offer information. This will give families the flexibility they need on an individual basis to benefit from this travel option.

A PTB won't be right for all families and for many service users there would be no change in their transport provision. However, for a number of children, a PTB may be the right solution and the most cost-effective way of meeting school travel needs. In these cases, the School Transport service will undertake an assessment with the child and parents, to see if this is a suitable option.

From our engagement sessions we heard that any arrangements for PTB must be administratively straightforward and place little additional burden on parents. We would aim to agree any PTBs at the beginning of the school year with a review at the end of the school year

Parents would not be obliged to accept the offer of a PTB.

Some examples of what PTB options may be available are set out in the table below:

PTB Options	Description
Option 1: Daily rates	<p>In this option, the PTB will be based on a banded daily rate, depending on the length of each journey. For illustration purposes this could be at the following banded rates:</p> <p>A) 0-4.99 miles per journey, with maximum rates likely to be £10 per day or £1,900 per year. B) 5-9.99 miles per journey, with maximum rates likely to be £20 per day or £3,800 per year. C) 10-19.99 miles per journey, with maximum rates likely to be £35 per day or £6,650/year. D) 20+ miles per journey, with maximum rates likely to be - £45 per day or £8,550 per year.</p>
Option 2: Mileage rates	<p>In this option a single rate would be offered, regardless of distance. A likely mileage rate is £0.45 per mile, based on four journeys per day.</p>
Option 3: Flat rate	<p>In this option a fixed weekly or monthly allowance regardless of distance travelled would be offered. Rates could vary from £30 to £100 per week based on needs and eligibility.</p>
Option 4: Enhanced rates for the most complex needs	<p>This option would provide extra support for families where children have more complex transport needs Higher rates for families with children receiving high-level DLA or PIP.</p>
Option 5: Mixed model	<p>This option would give a high degree of flexibility and could include any combination of daily rates, mileage rates, flat rate allowances and enhanced rates for the most complex needs, based on distance and specific needs. This may also be combined with enhanced rates for families where children have more complex transport needs. This is a popular model for many councils across the country.</p>

Proposal Seven: Driving Lessons

The offer of funded driving lessons where the young person is the correct age, and this is the most cost-efficient option. Students can drive a car when they are 17 if they have, or have applied for, the enhanced rate of the mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

Proposal Eight: Transport Vehicles

The Council may procure a vehicle to transport a child to and from their school or education setting. Wherever possible children will travel together in vehicles and will be picked up and dropped off at a convenient location within reasonable distance from their home. A home pick-up and drop-off will only be made where the Council deems it essential due to a child's significant needs. Where children are travelling in a transport vehicle, they will be required to notify the Council in advance should they not need the transport on any particular day so the Council will not incur unnecessary expense. Failure to do so may affect future transport arrangements for that child. Should transport be provided and there are three or more instances in any one year where the Council has not been notified with sufficient notice to cancel the service without reasonable cause, transport support may be withdrawn.

The allocation of travel assistance via a transport vehicle will be based on assessed need. In the case of children with special education needs, disabilities and mobility difficulties, there will be a review of applications to determine the support a child may need. Where necessary, a specialist vehicle will be provided (for example, a vehicle that is able to accommodate a wheelchair). Where assessed as needed, passenger assistants will be provided.

Vehicle transport provision will be ranked in the following order:

- A) A seat on a minibus or coach, including the use of group pick up points where appropriate.
- B) A seat within a shared vehicle.
- C) In exceptional circumstance - an individual vehicle.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information

You are invited to give your views on the proposed changes to the School Travel Assistance Policy. You can do this by using the online response form at [Cumberland.gov.uk/HaveYourSay](https://cumberland.gov.uk/HaveYourSay)

The Information Pack and Response Form are also available to download and print from the consultation webpage.

If you require a paper copy of the Information Pack or the Response Form or if you have any queries about the consultation, please email HaveYourSay@cumberland.gov.uk with 'School Travel Assistance Policy consultation 2024' as the subject.

The consultation is open from 21 October 2024 and closes at 5pm on 9 December 2024. Please note that responses received after this date will not be considered as part of the consultation.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will eligibility for School Transport change based on these proposals?

The Council is **not** proposing changes to the statutory eligibility criteria for School Transport, however there are proposals to non-statutory school transport provision which may affect future applications. Regardless of any decisions made, the Council will continue to meet its statutory requirements.

My child is currently supported by a Passenger Assistant; will the Passenger Assistant be removed?

Any review of the provision of a Passenger Assistant would ensure that the needs of the child or young person are taken into account. If the child or young person requires a Passenger Assistant, as determined by a review by the Council, then the provision would not be removed. If the child or young person's needs have changed and a Passenger Assistant is no longer required, for example if a Passenger Assistant was provided due to the young age of the child or young person and now the child or young person's needs have changed as a result of their age, the provision of a Passenger Assistant would be removed over a transition period and in consultation with the family.

My child with SEND currently accesses shared transport to school. Can I apply for a Personal Transport Budget?

A Personal Transport Budget is available in circumstances where the parent and the Council both agree that it is an appropriate way to meet the travel to school needs of the child or young person. This might be because the child or young person has complex needs that the parent understands best, or it might be that the parent is available and happy to take their child to school but needs some financial support to enable them to do so.

I think my child would be suitable for Independent Travel Training. How do I request this?

Participation in Independent Travel Training would be determined in consultation with the Council, the parent and the school. If the proposal is agreed and you think your child would be suitable for the training, then there would be an opportunity to apply.