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Post-16 and Post-19 Transport Policy Statement 2026-27 academic year



West Sussex County Council Transport Policy Statement for Students aged 16-25 years

This policy statement is intended to support students, families, and professionals in understanding what transport options and financial support are available from West Sussex County Council for further education learners aged 16–25 with an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan).

Department Responsible: Education and Skills

Contact Details:

Gregory Merrett, Principal School Transport Officer

County Hall

West Street

Chichester

West Sussex

PO19 1RQ

[Email:Gregory.Merrett@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Gregory.Merrett@westsussex.gov.uk)

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1. Introduction

Most young people make their own arrangements to get to their school or college. More information can be viewed on our [website](#).

This document sets out what support and schemes are available to students. This includes commercially available discounts, financial assistance to help plan the journey to school/college and, in exceptional circumstances, where the council will make arrangements. This is usually for students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

Local Authorities do not have to provide free (or subsidised) Post-16 travel support. They have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the support that West Sussex County Council considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post-16 learners receiving education or training. This is written in accordance with section 509 of the Education Act 1996. This policy statement also includes relevant young adult learners (19+) with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Travel support for young people carrying on their education Post-16 does not automatically continue.

2. Aims and Objectives

The travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) and travel assistance policy for post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) seeks to ensure that students from West Sussex can continue in further education and are able to access information to help them to do so. This includes transport provision, transport planning and financial support with transport costs. The Policy Statement gives practical information about the schemes and support available within West Sussex. It sits alongside the Policy itself.

This Policy Statement gives contact details and links to transport information, travel concessions or products and the assistance available for:

1. Young people of sixth form age
2. Young people of sixth form age with an EHCP
3. Young adult learners aged 19+ with an EHCP

For the purposes of this document, a person is of sixth form age if they are aged 16-18 (or have started their course before they turned 19 and continue to attend that course) and are referred to as Post-16 students. Young adult learners are those who are aged 19+ and have an EHCP.

This document and the Policy itself, specifies the support that West Sussex County Council considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post-16 learners receiving education or training.

Education or training refers to learning or training at a school, further education institution, a council maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education, an establishment funded directly by the Education Skills Funding Agency, learning providers delivering accredited programs of learning which led to positive outcomes and are funded by the council, for example, colleges, charities and private learning providers.

The current Travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) is available on the Council's website.

For information on current transport options, travel concessions and products on public transport please see attached 'Supporting Documents'

3. Transport and Travel Support

3.1 Active travel

Where safe and suitable, active travel can support independence and wellbeing. The Council encourages learners and families to explore supported walking or cycling schemes, particularly when building confidence with travel training.

The Council's [cycle journey planner](#) can help you to plan your journey by bike. There's more information and links to a variety of [active travel options here](#).

3.2 Concessionary tickets for young people 16-25

'[Travel discounts and concessions](#)' shows details of public transport operators and the travel concessions/products currently offered. These will be updated as details of the prices and offers are known. Most bus operators offer student discounts. These are run by the operator to their own terms and conditions.

The 16-17 Saver gives 50% off most rail tickets, including season tickets. It is valid from age 16 to when the young person turns 18. Season tickets bought using a 16-17 Saver can be used for up to four months beyond the 18th birthday if bought before the birthday.

Students may wish to investigate the [UniZone](#) scheme and the [16-25 Railcard](#) which costs £30 and saves 1/3 on rail fares throughout Great Britain for a year but with restrictions on usage.

The [Disabled Person's Bus Pass](#) offers free travel on buses at any time of day. Students of any age with a physical or learning difficulty may be eligible. There is no restriction for West Sussex residents using the Disabled Person's Bus Pass as long as the journey starts or finishes in West Sussex. More information and the application form are available by visiting the link above.

Students will also find the [Traveline](#) website helpful for planning any public transport journeys to and from school and college. [National Rail Enquiries](#) gives details for journey planning for those travelling only by train.

Many of the travel concessions/products have been put in place by transport operators following input from the council, even where no funding is provided by the council for the scheme.

They can be accessed by any student, including apprentices and young people who are not in education or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET. The Council's approach to sustainable travel to school and college is contained in the sustainable modes of transport strategy which is published on the Council's website.

3.3 Travel support from schools and colleges

Chichester College ([Brinsbury Campus](#)), [Plumpton College](#) and [Collyers College](#) have organized their own buses. Tickets can be purchased directly from the colleges and the details are uploaded by the individual colleges on their own websites.

School Contacts 2026-2027 (found in the Supporting Documents) contains contact details for schools and colleges.

4. The 16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation so that they can remain in education. There are two types of bursaries:

1. A [vulnerable bursary](#) of up to £1,200 for young people defined in specific groups e.g., those in care, care leavers, those in receipt of Income support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support; those in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and Disability of Personal Independence Payments in their own right. The eligibility criteria are at the link above.
2. [Discretionary bursaries](#) which schools and colleges award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, book and equipment.

School 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 school or college to make an application. This applies equally to apprentices or those who are currently, or in danger of becoming, NEET.

5. 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 £160 per week, whilst you are learning.

The details of the scheme including the applicable types of childcare, details of payment and eligibility are at www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

6. Local authority support for young people without Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND)

Students who live in rural areas and who attend schools with sixth forms are offered access to school contract buses. There is a planned contribution of £896 subject to budgetary confirmation at sixth form age. The service is available at the beginning and end of the school day and in some cases a 'late bus service' also operates. The service is subject to the availability of places where alternative public transport exists.

Schools and colleges may also offer discretionary help from other sources, such as the 16-19 Bursary fund, local trusts, diocesan funds, school, or college budgets etc. Assessments would be discretionary at local level. Students should enquire about the possibility of help and apply direct to the school or college offering the chosen course.

Care leavers are also assessed through their individual pathway plans.

7. Local authority support for learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

Most young people with SEND make their own arrangements to get to their school or college and can use the same travel support and discounts as those without SEND.

The County Council offers help with transport costs to Post-16 students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who have an EHCP. These students may not be able to use public transport and/or may have long and expensive journeys to access the nearest suitable course to their home. The 2026 - 2027 [Travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan \(EHC plan\)](#) is available on the council's website.

7.1 Eligibility criteria

The following gateway criteria must be met for an application for travel assistance to be considered – see [Travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan \(EHC plan\)](#) / [Travel assistance policy for post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan \(EHC plan\)](#):

- The student lives in West Sussex
- The student has a current EHCP
- The student will be attending the equivalent of a full-time educational course which allows for appropriate progression.
- The proposed course (or a comparable one that meets the learner's needs) must be at the nearest suitable school or college to the learner's home address.
- The shortest available walking route from home to school/college is three miles or more

If these criteria are met, we will then consider the student's personal circumstances. This includes the support available from family or others to decide whether travel assistance is necessary.

If eligible, consideration will be given to the most suitable travel assistance for the student. This will be in the form of:

- Independent travel training or public transport
- Personal transport budget
- Minibus or taxi

An annual application for transport assistance must be made, even if the student is remaining at the same school/college. The [Post-16 online application form](#) is available on our website.

Applications should be made as soon as possible in March for September 2026. Applications made after 30 June 2026 may lead to transport assistance not being in place for the start of term. Parents will need to plan how their students will get to school/college for the start of term.

From September 2026 the contribution towards transport costs for those who are eligible for transport assistance is £896 per year. The contribution must be agreed before passes are provided or transport is put in place. Payment can be made in instalments by 7 direct debit payments of £128, spread over 7 months from October to April.

The size of the contribution has been set after having regard to the cost of travelling to a school/college by bus, the average cost of council provided transport to mainstream schools, and what other authorities charge.

For qualifying families on a low income (e.g. eligible for [Free School Meals](#)) no contribution is required.

All applications are assessed on an individual basis.

Transport assistance to the work element of Supported Internships may be funded through the Access to Work fund available from colleges.

7.2 Low-income criteria

The County Council offers **free** transport to Post-16 students with SEND who have an EHCP and who meet the eligibility criteria where families are in receipt of:

- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit or
- Support from the National Asylum Support Service under Part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400

N.B. These criteria are based on current government guidance and may be updated if national eligibility rules for low-income households' change.

7.3 Post-19 (Young Adult Learners) with an EHCP

The County Council also offers limited help with transport to young adult learners (aged 19 and above) with an EHCP. They must meet the same eligibility criteria of distance from home to the college/placement that students of sixth form age must meet in accordance with the Post-19 Transport policy

When young adults with an EHCP are offered assistance no direct charge is made.

An annual application for transport assistance must be made, even if the student is remaining at the same school/college. The [Post-19 online application form](#) is available on our website.

Applications should be made as soon as possible in March for September 2026. Applications made after 30 June 2026 may lead to transport assistance not being in place for the start of term. Parents will need to plan how their young adults will get to school/college for the start of term.

For both Post-16 students and young adult learners at Post-19 every application is considered on an individual basis.

8. Refund Policy

If a student has paid the Post-16 contribution and no longer requires transport assistance then a refund would be offered if the amount contributed is over and above the cost spent on the transport to date. Any remaining contribution would be refunded. Refunds will be processed within 28 days of receiving the request, subject to confirmation that the student has withdrawn, and transport has ceased. Refunds are not usually given where a student does not use transport during the summer term.

An email requesting a refund can be sent to Post16travel@westsussex.gov.uk

9. Travel Training

Many schools and colleges include independent travel training for students with SEND. Where appropriate, training is provided by schools for students prior to reaching the end of Year 11 in preparation for attending college. Colleges and special schools work with parents and students, encouraging them to take responsibility and to help with independent travel training. If travel training is offered and declined without valid reason, the Council reserves the right to review and potentially withdraw travel assistance. In addition, some voluntary groups e.g., parent carer support groups, also offer travel training for young people.

To support independence, the County Council can arrange training for staff and volunteers in schools, colleges and voluntary groups to enable them to deliver effective independent travel training to young people.

Special schools and colleges continue to work with young people, where appropriate, using PITT (Programme for Independent Travel Training) or their own programme.

Some bus operators offer their own schemes. At Brighton and Hove/Metrobus this can be organised usually in a response to a request from a group or organisation. This could be on a live bus or using a refurbished community space in Brighton.

Occasional, Southeast Communities Rail Partnership provides free train travel training, called 'Try a Train' to groups of young people with additional needs, please find more information at [Try a Train in Sussex | Southeast Communities Rail Partnership](#).

10. Local authority support in other circumstances

The County Council also offers the following help:

Where a student with an EHCP reaches 19 whilst on a course and is receiving support with transport costs, the help will continue until the end of the course, if they meet the usual eligibility criteria during this time.

Where a student with an EHCP is not eligible for help at the start of the course and family circumstances change e.g., because they have moved home and may qualify on grounds of distance etc, an application for support may be made if the student was under 19 on 1st September before the beginning of the course.

Help and advice with transport may be given to care leavers on an agreed course, at least to the age of 21, subject to assessment by the Leaving Care Service.

In all cases each application for assistance will be considered individually.

11. Travelling to a course beyond the local authority area

If you reach the criteria outlined in paragraph 7.1 above and the placement is outside West Sussex, transport assistance may still be offered. Advice and help on this should be sought from your SENAT SEND Officer

Post-19 learners and/or their parents/carers should make an online application if travel assistance is required, and it will be assessed under the Post-19 Transport policy.

12. Additional eligibility criteria

Occasionally a student will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In accordance with statutory guidance, travel assistance will only be provided from and to a single address at which the young adult learner is habitually and normally resident. Where a student learner splits their time equally between addresses, travel assistance will be assessed from the address which is registered with the college/sixth form as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant college/sixth form admission application form.

13. Applying for local authority transport support

Post-16 Transport for those with EHCPs should be applied for annually, even if the student/young person is remaining at the same school/college.

There is a Post-16 contribution for students of sixth form age of £896 for 2026-2027, which is subject to annual review. If you are assessed as a family on a low income, then the contribution will not have to be paid. A Payment Options form will be sent out if the contribution is applicable, which needs to be completed and returned before transport assistance is arranged.

The [application form](#) for those of sixth form age will be on the Council's website from March 2026 for 2026-27 academic year.

The revised form will be available from March 2026 for courses starting in September 2026. Applications should be made as soon as possible in March. Applications after 30 June 2026 may lead to transport assistance not being in place for the start of term. Parents will need to plan how their students will get to school/college for the start of term.

If a hard copy is required, then please contact the Post-16 Transport Admin Team at Post-16travel@westsussex.gov.uk or telephone 0330 222 3588.

Those young adult learners who would like transport assistance and will be starting a new course after the age of 19 should make an [online application](#) via our website.

The online form will be available from March 2026 for courses starting in September 2026. Applications should be made as soon as possible in March. Applications after 30 June 2026 may lead to transport assistance not being in place for the start of term. Parents will need to plan how their students will get to school/college for the start of term.

If a hard copy is required, then please contact the Post-19 Transport Admin Team at Post19travel@westsussex.gov.uk or telephone 0330 222 4166.

14. Appeals

For Post-16 students with EHCPs, queries about eligibility should be addressed in the first instance to the Post-16 Transport Admin Team at Post16travel@westsussex.gov.uk or 0330 222 3588. Every effort will be made to resolve issues but in some cases a Stage One Appeal may be made to the Director of Education and Skills, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex. In some cases, it may be necessary to refer the matter to a panel of elected members as a Stage two appeal.

For Post-19 young adult learners queries about eligibility should be addressed in the first instance to the Post-19 Admin team at Post19travel@westsussex.gov.uk or 0330 222 4166. Every effort will be made to resolve issues but in some cases a stage one appeal may be made to the Director of Education and Skills. In some cases, it may be necessary to refer the matter to a panel of elected members as a Stage two appeal.

Appeals Process Summary:

- Stage 1: Request papers on behalf of the Director of Education and Skills.
- Stage 2: If unresolved, escalate to an Independent Member Panel.
- Timescales: Stage 1 within 20 working days; Stage 2 within 40 working days.
- For unresolved procedural issues, you may contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

15. List of Supporting Documents

- Travel assistance policy for 16-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)
- Travel assistance policy for post-19-year-olds with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)
- Travel Concessions 2026-2027
- School and college contacts 2026-2027
- Other contacts for services offering support 2026-2027