



East Sussex County Council

Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

2026 - 2027

DRAFT

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Introduction

Local authorities are not required to provide free or subsidised transport for students aged 16 and over. However, they **must** publish a transport policy statement each year. This statement explains what transport arrangements or support the local authority considers necessary to help young people of sixth-form age attend their education or training.

All young people who continue in education after the age of 16 must apply for travel support.

The term ‘**sixth-form age**’ refers to young people who are over 16 but under 19, as well as those who started their study programme before turning 19 (typically Years 12, 13 and 14).

Local authorities also have a responsibility to encourage, enable and support young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to take part in education or training, up to the age of 25.

In this policy, 'Post 16' includes both young people of sixth-form age and those with learning difficulties or disabilities up to age 25.

This document sets out the support that **East Sussex County Council** considers necessary to help Post-16 learners access their education or training.

When we refer to **education or training**, we mean provision at:

- schools
- further education colleges
- council-maintained or assisted institutions providing higher or further education
- establishments funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency
- learning providers delivering accredited programmes funded by the council (such as colleges, charities and private training providers)

Aims and objectives

The council aims to have a clear policy that families understand, to enable learners to make decisions about where to study having considered the transport options available to them, and to signpost them to other support as appropriate.

The council has published separate policies outlining the transport assistance it provides to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The policies can be found at: [Transport policies | East Sussex County Council](#)

The eligibility criteria for learners with an EHC plan are explained in the section called 'Local authority support for learners with an EHC plan' (pages 9-13). Learners of sixth-form age and adult learners have different criteria.

Transport and travel support

Concessionary tickets for young people 16 - 25 from public transport providers including council run vehicles (*information correct as at 16 February 2026. Prices are subject to change*)

Bus travel discounts for young people and students

Which bus ticket do I need?

This will depend on your age, where you are going and how often you travel. See bus routes, services and timetables on the [East Sussex bus map](#).

Check with the bus company before you travel.

East Sussex Freedom weekly ticket

The Freedom weekly ticket provides bus travel on all bus services for under 19's. Buy from the bus driver with proof of age*. The cost is £20 for seven days of unlimited travel.

Bus company offers

Bus companies in East Sussex have their own fare offers, check which is best for you:

- [Brighton & Hove Buses - Children and young people](#)
- [Stagecoach - Offers in the south east](#)
- [Compass Travel - Tickets and fares](#)

Disabled Person's bus pass

The disabled person's pass is for people of fare paying age (5 and over). Who live in England with a qualifying disability. The bus pass allows free travel on local buses throughout England. You can use your bus pass for travel at any time within East Sussex County Council boundaries. Please see [when you can use your Disabled Person's bus pass](#) for more details.

Any disability should have a substantial effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities and must:

- be permanent, or
- have lasted at least 12 months, or
- be likely to last at least 12 months, or
- be likely to recur

Visit [applying for a Disabled Person's bus pass](#) for more details.

Proof of age

3i-D card and Yoti digital ID (11-19 year olds)

3i-D gives you:

- proof of age as part of the [PASS national proof of age scheme](#).
- discounts on some bus fares in East Sussex.
- digital ID on your phone, via the [Yoti mobile app](#).

Who can use a 3i-D card?

Young people aged 11-19 who live, study, train or work in East Sussex.

Find out more and apply: [3i-D card - CitizenCard](#).

Train discounts and railcards

16 to 17 saver railcard

Costing £35 for one year, the 16 to 17 Saver is the national railcard for 16 and 17 year-olds. It gives 50% off standard Anytime, Off-Peak, Advance and Season tickets for travel at any time of the day.

The 16 to 17 Saver is valid for one year or up until your 18th birthday, whichever comes first. However, if you buy a season ticket with a 16 to 17 Saver discount before it expires, you can continue to use it for up to 4 months after the expiry date. The expiry date and the date that you can use your season ticket until are shown on the 16 to 17 Saver.

Find out more and apply at [16 to 17 saver](#)

16 to 25 railcard

The [16 to 25 railcard](#) offers 33% off a wide range of tickets for those not travelling each day (subject to a minimum fare). This card is aimed at leisure travel - it cannot be used for season tickets.

This card costs £35 for one year or £80 for three years.

Unizone rail ticket (college and university students)

The Unizone ticket gives unlimited discounted travel for a fixed price to those who study in or around Brighton or Worthing. To qualify for a Unizone ticket, a student will need a 16-25 Railcard and valid ID confirming attendance in further or higher education.

Find out more on the [Southern website](#)

Disabled Persons Railcard

This card offers 33% off adult rail fares for travel on the National Rail network in Great Britain. Companions also get 33% off their rail fare. There are no time restrictions on the Disabled Persons Railcard, so it can be used at any time of the day.

It costs £20 for a one-year card or £54 for a three-year card. [Disabled Persons Railcard website](#)

See [Transport if you're disabled - GOV.UK](#) for more information.

You may qualify for a card if you:

- receive disability-related benefits
- are registered as deaf or use a hearing aid
- are registered as visually impaired
- have epilepsy.

Coaches serving school sixth forms

Students attending schools with sixth forms, where hired vehicles are available, can purchase a travel permit for a vacant seat. The cost from September 2026 is yet to be finalised. The current cost is £188.70 per term based on a six-term year. Full details of buying a seat on school transport can be found online at [Buy a vacant seat on a school coach | East Sussex County Council](#)

Travel support from schools and colleges

Some schools and colleges provide their own transport for students. Details can be found below and are correct at the time of publication. However, they may be subject to change by the provider themselves without prior notification to the council. Students are advised to contact their school/college directly regarding any possible changes.

- Heathfield Community College - runs two services in conjunction with local bus companies. Payments for these services are made termly across the academic year. Students in receipt of the 16-19 Bursary can have help with transport costs. The services are partially subsidised by the College for all students.

Find out more at [Heathfield Community College](#) or by contacting the College directly.

- Plumpton College - offers an extensive bus route for their own students, allowing access from a wide range of surrounding areas, making it easy and simple to get to college.

The Plumpton College bus is provided by Zeelo. For route details, bus timetables and information on how to purchase tickets, please visit [Plumpton College | Zeelo](#)

If your school/college is not listed above, please contact them directly for up-to-date information regarding any transport and/or support they may be able to offer, particularly if the school or college is outside of East Sussex.

16 to 19 Bursary Fund

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 bursary:

1. Bursary for students in vulnerable groups - You could get up to £1,200 a year 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.

2. Discretionary bursary - To be eligible for the discretionary bursary young people must:

- be aged 16 and under 19 on 31 August 2025 or
- be over 19 on 31 August 2025 and have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)
- be over 19 on 31 August 2025 and continuing on a course you started aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuer')
- study at a publicly funded school or college, or be on an unpaid training course

Schools and colleges are responsible for managing both types of bursary. You should contact your chosen school or college to make an application.

Further information can be found at [16 to 19 Bursary Fund: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Hardship Fund

The following colleges have been allocated extra council funds to assist the most disadvantaged learners to access their course. These funds can be issued **in addition to** Bursary Funds. You should make enquiries to Student Services at your college.

- East Sussex College Group - Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes
- Plumpton College
- Bexhill 6th Form College

Care to Learn

Overview

The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs while you study. You must be aged under 20 at the start of your course. You can get up to £180 per child per week.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- Your childcare, including deposit and registration fees
- a childcare 'taster' session for up to 5 days
- keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays
- taking your child to their childcare provider

Payments

Childcare payments go directly to your childcare provider. Before they can be paid:

- your childcare provider needs to confirm your child's attendance
- your school or college needs to confirm that you're attending your course

Travel payments go direct to your school or college - they'll either pay you or arrange travel for you.

Payments end when:

- you stop attending your course
- you reach the end of your course
- your child stops attending childcare

Eligibility

You can get Care to Learn if all the following apply:

- you're a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you're the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you're either a British citizen or have a legal right to live and study in England
- your course qualifies
- your childcare provider qualifies

Your course

Care to Learn is only available publicly funded courses in England. This includes courses that take place in:

- schools
- school sixth-forms
- sixth-form colleges
- other colleges and learning providers, including Foundation Learning
- your community at Children's Centres

Your learning provider can tell you if your course is eligible.

Your childcare provider

To qualify, your childcare provider must be one of the following:

- registered with Ofsted
- registered with a childminder agency
- a school

They can be a:

- childminder
- preschool playgroup
- day nursery
- out of school club

For more information, please visit [Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

Local authority support

Local authority support for young people without special educational needs or disabilities

The council regards where a student decides to study as an individual choice. When deciding, it's essential that students (and their parents/carers) consider the home-to-college journey as the council does not have a duty to provide transport assistance to post 16 students other than the arrangements contained in this policy.

The council has considered the needs of those for whom it would not be reasonably practicable to access education or training provision if no arrangements were made. The council deems the various concessionary travel schemes, coupled with financial support for those with genuine money difficulties, results in there being sufficient access for all students to attend the school/college of their reasonable choice, irrespective of its location and their home.

Public transport services cannot be tailored to meet individual timetables and students are expected to make suitable adjustments to their travel arrangements to facilitate attendance.

Journey length, rurality and the nature of the route are factors for families to consider, and these issues do not, in themselves, confer an entitlement to transport assistance.

Local authority support for learners with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan)

The council recognises that some students with an EHC plan may not be able to travel to school or college independently or may not yet be ready to do so.

Criteria for help (16-19 students)

The following gateway criteria must be met for an application for travel assistance to be considered.

- The student lives in East Sussex;
- The student has a current EHC plan;
- The student will be attending the equivalent of a full-time educational course which allows for appropriate progression;
- The placement is the nearest suitable college to their home address and named in the student's EHC plan;
- The student does not have the ability to travel independently.

If these gateway criteria are met, the council will then consider the circumstances of the student and the family and their broader network, to assess whether it is necessary to provide transport for the student. The council thinks it is reasonable for parents/carers to prioritise transporting the student over other commitments. In considering the eligibility of the student to receive an offer and what offer should be made, the following (and any other relevant factors) will be considered:

1. Nature of the journey for the student/family for example, the distance, likely journey time, and complexity of the journey by road, public transport or on foot; whether the journey on foot or public transport could be reasonably made if the student is accompanied.
2. Parent/carer/broader network availability to accompany for example, the current commitments of the parent(s)/carer(s) and broader network; whether the student's family or broader network is reasonably able to transport or accompany them, given all other factors. Unless doing so is unreasonable, parents/carers will be expected to prioritise transporting the student over other commitments such as (but not exclusively):
 - taking pre-school aged children to nursery;
 - voluntary work;
 - undertaking work commitments that can reasonably be carried out at times other than at college start and end times, for example when self-employed or on flexible work contracts.

3. Available suitable vehicle and/or disability benefits for example, whether the family has a suitable vehicle, which may include a Motability vehicle; whether the student is receiving PIP with a component intended to support travel; any current social care support.
4. The student's needs relating to travel for example, whether the student has complex needs, and/or requires a second person on transport; if independent travel is a realistic goal, and whether this has been appropriately encouraged by the family.
5. Other relevant factors, for example, the health of the parent/carer and the potential impact of providing transport or accompanying the student, given all other factors.

The following evidence may be required in addition to the travel assistance application:

1. Recent evidence (dated within 3 months) from a relevant health and/or educational professional regarding the SEND of the student and how this impacts on the need for travel assistance, their ability to walk or travel on public transport, accompanied or otherwise.
2. Recent evidence (dated within 3 months) from a relevant health professional regarding a parent/carer's health, if this means that they cannot accompany or transport the student themselves.
3. Evidence from the parent/carer's employer regarding their work commitments, to include working hours, days, times, location of work and distance in miles from home to work and from the placement to work.
4. Written evidence to demonstrate other commitments, although broader caring responsibilities would not normally be considered as a reason why a parent/carer would not be able to transport the student, as the family would be expected to find alternative solutions in most cases.

Contribution towards post 16 travel assistance

Where travel assistance is agreed, a contribution towards to the cost of travel is required for students of sixth form age - those over 16 years but under 19 years - or continuing learners who started their programme before their 19th birthday. The contribution is based on the current cost of a 'Freedom' bus ticket and is subject to change. The current cost is £760 per year. Should the cost change, the contribution will be adjusted accordingly. Payment can be made in 10 instalments. Transport will not be arranged until payment in advance is made. If subsequent payments are late, transport will be suspended or even cancelled.

Low-income families are required to contribute half of the amount - currently £380. To qualify as Low Income, the applicant must meet the same eligibility criteria as for Free School Meals. More information on eligibility can be found on ESCC's website at [Free school meals | East Sussex County Council](#)

Criteria for help (Adult learners)

The gateway criteria set out for the 16-19 students applies. If an adult learner meets the gateway criteria the Council will consider the following (and any other relevant factors) when determining whether transport is necessary and if so, what offer should be made.

1. Nature of the journey for the adult learner for example, the distance, likely journey time, and complexity of the journey by road, public transport or on foot; whether the journey on foot or public transport could be reasonably made if the adult learner is accompanied.
2. Parent/carer/broader network ability to provide transport support, e.g. accompanying the learner on some journeys; transporting the learner on certain days.
3. Available suitable vehicle for example, whether the adult learner has a vehicle for their use, which may include a Motability vehicle.
4. The adult learner's needs relating to travel for example, whether the adult learner has complex needs, and/or requires a second person on transport; if independent, travel is a realistic goal.
5. Any income available to the adult learner that can reasonably be expected to be used to fund transport to and from college. This may include, for example, a college bursary, disability benefits or the mobility component of personal independence payments (PIP).
6. The financial circumstances of the adult learner and potential impact of a declined application. A financial statement will be requested in support of the application to determine reasonable outgoings on essential items.
7. Advice from the college, for example, whether independent travel training is part of the learning programme.
8. Other relevant factors.

The following evidence may be required in addition to an application for travel:

- Recent evidence (dated within 3 months) from a relevant health and/or educational professional regarding the SEND of the adult learner and how these impact on the need for travel assistance, their ability to walk or travel on public transport, accompanied or otherwise.
- A copy of the care and support plan (if applicable)
- Where the parent/carer is stated as being the primary carer/advocate for the adult learner and/or in receipt of Carer's Allowance, further evidence may be required regarding the support with transport they are able to provide (if any).

In the case of adult learners, if the council agrees transport is **necessary** it will be provided free of charge.

Type of help given

It is for the council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective mode of transport to get students between home and college, taking account of any special arrangements to support the student's particular needs. This may be one of the following:

- Independent Travel Training
- Personal Travel Budget
- Link transport
- Minibus or taxi

Please note that minibus or taxi travel will usually only be provided if necessity is proven and for students with severe disabilities and/or the most complex health needs. This type of transport is shared with other students unless a needs assessment determines that this is not reasonable and may not be a door-to-door service.

Service limitations

Students will usually only be transported at published school/college start and finish times, and they may be expected to enable sharing with other students through early arrival or delayed collection if safe to do so; or students may need to arrive earlier or leave later than their taught hours in college.

An offer of travel assistance may be part-week or involve a pick-up or drop-off point.

Transport will not be provided for the following:

- Temporary addresses. This is a domestic matter for families to resolve.
- Journeys to and from other destinations. Transport is not offered to or from points other than the college/education centre and home or pick up/drop off points.
- To take account of work/business commitments or domestic difficulties of parents/carers.
- To accommodate attendance at before or after school or college activities or homework clubs.
- Before or after medical appointments
- To accommodate work experience or off-site educational placements
- For pre-course visits, 'taster' days or parents' evenings/visits
- In the event of sickness where a student has to be collected from college
- Specific exam timetables that start or finish outside of the normal college day
- College trips or educational visits

Review of travel provision

A new application must be made if the student moves to a new home or other circumstances change.

Failure to inform us of a change of circumstances may result in having to pay back for costs incurred by the council.

The mode of travel assistance being offered will also be reviewed regularly to make sure that the service provided continues to be appropriate for the student's needs and the most cost effective for the council.

Refunds

We do not reimburse travel costs incurred before an application is approved.

Travel training

Based on the information given in an application, students will be assessed for suitability for our Independent Travel Training (ITT) programme, which can provide a young person with the skills and confidence for greater independence in their adult life.

A young person who is ready for travel training may be offered temporary travel assistance until they have progressed to being independent on their journey to school or college.

What can travel training provide?

The trainer works with the student and family. They tailor the programme to their journey from home to their school or college. The training sessions with the student are one-to-one. The needs of the individual determine the length of the course. The student gains independence gradually over several weeks. Progress is closely monitored, and students only move on through the programme when the trainer feels they are ready. On the final journeys the trainer follows the student without any contact unless needed.

Find out more online about [What is independent travel training \(ITT\)? | East Sussex County Council](#)

Other travel assistance available if application declined

Where it is decided that travel assistance will not be provided by the council, but the gateway criteria as set out in the policy are met, the parent/carer may be offered a low-income mileage allowance.

This scheme is available to low-income parents/carers who have to travel long distances (over 10 miles) to transport the student to the college named in their EHC plan. The mileage allowance given will be 25p per mile for one return journey per day for the miles beyond the first 10 mile of the journey from home. For example, where the distance from home to college is 15 miles, the allowance given will be calculated as 2 journeys x 5 miles x 25p. Proof of attendance will be sought from the school/college.

If you think that you may be eligible for this low income mileage allowance, you can make an application via the online application form at: [Apply for travel assistance \(16-19\) | East Sussex County Council](#)

Apprenticeships

Students doing apprenticeships should apply to their employer or learning provider to have reasonable travel expenses met.

Non-transport solutions to facilitate learner access

Speak to your learning provider about non-transport solutions to support your access to education or training such as e-learning options. For those with an EHC plan, you can also speak to your Assessment and Planning Officer.

Applying for local authority transport support

Applicants must use on our online form found at [Apply for travel assistance for students aged 16-19 with an EHC plan](#) For support with completing an application please email SEN.transport@eastsussex.gov.uk

Those without internet access can phone 01273 335530 to arrange for a form to be sent.

Appeals

If an application is declined, you can follow the two-stage [transport appeals](#) process.

Mainstream college and sixth form contact information

Bexhill 6th form College

Website: [Bexhill 6th Form College](#)

Telephone: 01424 214545

Email: enquiries@bexhillcollege.ac.uk

East Sussex College (Eastbourne, Lewes and Hastings)

Website: [East Sussex College](#)

Telephone (Eastbourne): 030 300 39300 - Email: Eastbourne.admissions@escg.ac.uk

Telephone (Lewes): 030 300 39200 - Email: Lewes.admissions@escg.ac.uk

Telephone (Hastings): 030 300 39400 - Email: hastings.admissions@escg.ac.uk

Plumpton College

Website: [Plumpton College](#)

Telephone: 01273 890454

Email: enquiries@plumpton.ac.uk

DV8 Sussex

Website: [DV8 Sussex](#)

Telephone: 01424 213890 (Bexhill campus) Telephone: 01273 550432 (Brighton campus)

Beacon Academy sixth form

Website: [Beacon Academy sixth form](#)

Telephone: 01892 603018

Email: office@beacon-academy.org

Heathfield CC sixth form

Website: [Heathfield CC sixth form](#)

Telephone: 01435 866066

Email: office@heathfieldcc.co.uk

Seaford Head School sixth form

Website: [Seaford Head School sixth form](#)

Telephone: 01323 872723

Email: reception@seafordhead.org

Uckfield College sixth form

Website: [Uckfield College sixth form](#)

Telephone: 01825 764844

Email: office@uckfield.college

Consultation

Each year the council is required to consult young people of sixth form age and their parents/carers as well as other stakeholders on the Post 16 Transport Policy statement before it is finalised. Consultation lasts for a minimum of 4 weeks.

The policy could be changed in the future and the current support available does not amount to a legitimate expectation that it will continue to be offered.

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