



Northumberland
County Council

School Transport Policy For Children of Compulsory School Age September 2024

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1. Introduction

It is the responsibility of **parents** to ensure that their children of school age attend school (Section 444, Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006). In most cases, Northumberland County Council has no legal responsibility to offer direct assistance for this. However, we recognise the significant benefits to pupils' health and safety that comes from using sustainable means of travel to school. Consequently, we support cycling, scooting, walking, local bus services and car sharing. Further information regarding local bus services, timetables and season ticket costs can be found by visiting the [school transport webpage](#) and by visiting the [Sustainable Transport to Schools webpage](#) information is provided on walking, cycling or using scooters and other initiatives to reduce the use of cars for the school journey.

Words defined in the Glossary are highlighted wherever they occur in this policy. The glossary can be found at the end of the policy statement

Other than supporting travel arrangements for children with disabilities or **mobility problems** (further information on this is provided at para 3.8), the Council's statutory duty is limited to supporting a child's attendance at school by providing transport arrangements for those families that live beyond the **statutory walking distance** from the nearest appropriate school (section 508B, Education Act 1996, inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006). This policy outlines the way in which the local authority fulfils this duty and allocates transport to entitled children. It also seeks to explain how **parents**, children and schools have a joint responsibility to ensure that children travel safely to school. As mentioned above,

Northumberland County Council also has a statutory duty to offer travel support for children who cannot walk to school as a result of their **disability, mobility problems or special educational needs** (The Children and Families Act 2014 (Part 3, s30: Children and Young People with SEN or Disabilities & s14 of Schedule 2 of the SEND Regulations 2014) and this is also covered in this policy.

2. Roles & Responsibilities of the County Council & Parents

Where their children don't qualify for school transport, the Council recommends that **parents** consider:

- (i) arranging for their children to travel in safety between the **home** and the transport picking-up and setting-down points;
- (ii) imparting the Green Cross Code and the guidance for pedestrians in the Highway Code to all their children (whether they walk or use another mode of transport);
- (iii) arranging Bikeability training if they cycle to school;
- (iv) accompanying their child to and from school as required, relative to the risks faced and the child's proficiency;
- (v) waiting with/for their children at the appropriate pick-up and set-down points in the morning and afternoon.

The Council and schools will ensure safety in, around and on school premises by:

- (i) restricting car-based drop-off and pick-up arrangements on school grounds;
- (ii) introducing local rules regarding the drop-off and pick-up of pupils outside of school premises;
- (iii) applying behaviour codes of conduct for children accessing the school transport service or using public transport.

Where school transport is provided by the County Council, children are collected as close to their **home** as is reasonably possible. However, for most children, including many children with **special educational needs** they will have to walk a reasonable distance to a pickup point in the morning (and **home** in the afternoon from the drop-off point). The same road safety considerations will apply as with an assessment of a walking route to school (see para 3.6). The pickup/setting down point will not exceed a mile from the child's **home**. If it does, then feeder transport will be provided. Please note, private driveways or roads not owned or maintained by Northumberland County Council are not included in such measurements.

The Council is only able to take responsibility for arranging for the transport to turn up at the designated pick-up point each morning and at the drop-off point each afternoon. To make sure

that travel arrangements work well, **parents** will need to make arrangements for their children to get safely to the pick-up point and to get home after being dropped off. **Parents** will also need to:

- Get their children ready for school;
- Provide up to date contact information (landline and mobile phone numbers as well as email addresses) to their child's school, to the Passenger Transport team and to their child's transport provider - contact details for the Passenger Transport team are provided at the end of this policy;
- Notify us by completing a new transport application if the child's address changes; The application will be assessed in accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in this policy.
- Inform the Passenger Transport team about any **medical needs** their child has, including any medicines carried, by email, contact details are provided in para 19
- Fully co-operate with the County Council and their child's school if any behaviour issues arise when they are accessing the school transport service.

If there are persistent problems affecting the Council's ability to transport children safely (including issues about children's behaviour), the Council may not be able to continue to provide transport.

3. Eligibility Criteria for Qualifying for Free School Transport

The Council only provides free transport to children who are:

- Of **compulsory school age, i.e. aged 5 to 16 years**;
- **Resident** in Northumberland;
- Attending their nearest and appropriate **qualifying school**, or
- Attending their nearest school chosen on grounds of **religion or belief**;
- Living beyond the **statutory walking distance** for their age, or
- Living within the **statutory walking distance** for their age but the walking route is deemed "**unavailable**" for safety reasons by the County Council, or
- Qualifying for "**extended rights**" on the grounds of low income, or
- Unable to walk to school as a result of their **disability, mobility problems or special educational needs**.

3.1 Children of compulsory school age

This policy covers Home to School Transport arrangements for children of **compulsory school age** who attend a publicly funded school. A separate policy is applied for students aged over 16 which can be accessed by visiting the [school transport webpage](#)

Children entitled to 2, 3 and 4 year old early education are not entitled by law to free transport, and Northumberland County Council will not normally provide free transport for a child

attending a nursery class in a school or a Private Voluntary or Independent (PVI) setting, irrespective of the distance from **home**. This is also the case for children with **disabilities** and/or **special educational needs** and it remains the responsibility of the **parent** to transport their children between **home** and the early years setting.

However, a child aged 4 and over admitted on a full time basis to a reception class will be eligible to receive free transport in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

3.2 Resident in Northumberland

Northumberland County Council will only consider making arrangements for the provision of free transport to residents of Northumberland. Families of children who live outside of Northumberland but who attend schools in Northumberland are advised to approach their own local authority (i.e. the local authority they pay their Council Tax to) to find out if their children will qualify for free school transport.

3.3 Applying for School Places and Attending the Nearest Appropriate Qualifying School

Reference to the “nearest” **qualifying school** is taken to mean the **qualifying school** (which is defined at Para 23 under the Glossary) located closest to the child’s **home** address or the school located within the transport priority area for the child’s **home** address, with places available at the time an application for a school place should have been made – this will usually be the **normal school admissions round** once **parents** have been offered a place for their child to begin first or primary school or transfer to middle, high or secondary school. In some cases, eligibility will need to be assessed at other times, for example due to a family moving into the area in-year. **Parents** must contact the Council’s School Admissions team to confirm the availability or otherwise of school places for their children and must not assume there are no places following direct contact with a particular school. The nearest school could, in some cases include a school located outside of Northumberland.

Parents should consider how their children will get to school at the time they are choosing which schools to apply for. For some, the availability of free transport to school may be an important factor in their decision making. **Parents** should list their nearest school as well as the school located within the transport priority area for their **home** address (if different) as their first and (if necessary) second choices on their application form for a school place if they intend to apply for free school transport for their child.

“Appropriate” means that the school must provide an education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any **special educational needs** that the child may have. It does not mean the most appropriate school for a child. Schools are able to meet a wide range of needs.

How do I find out the school within transport priority area for my home address?

Schools in Northumberland usually have a defined catchment area for admission purposes,

i.e. a defined geographical area surrounding a school from which it will usually take most of its pupils. There is also a geographical area known as the '**transport priority area**' that Northumberland County Council uses to help determine eligibility for free school transport. For community and voluntary controlled schools, the catchment area for deciding priority for school admission purposes and the transport priority area used for assessing entitlement to free school transport will always be the same. However, some schools operate extended catchments for school admissions purposes beyond the areas recognised by Northumberland County Council for determining eligibility for free school transport. Such schools may include voluntary aided schools, foundation schools, trust schools as well as academies.

It must be stressed that it is the **transport priority area** designated by Northumberland County Council which will be used to determine entitlement to free school transport. If the relevant admission authority has not established a catchment area for a **qualifying school**, the nearest **qualifying school** to the **home** address will be used to determine transport entitlement.

In Northumberland, the **qualifying school** will be determined by **transport priority area** but, in some cases, there can be two **qualifying schools**: the school determined by the **transport priority area** and the nearest school to the **home** address (in some cases the school defined by the **transport priority area** is not always the nearest school to a **home** address). Information on school catchment areas used for school admission purposes and **transport priority areas** used to determine eligibility for free school transport can be found by using our [School Catchment and Transport Eligibility Maps](#)

How is the nearest school determined?

The nearest school is determined by measuring the shortest route from the **home** address main entrance that opens onto a road or street that is maintained at public expense to the main school entrance that meets the public highway. Where the schools are within the **statutory walking distance**, the nearest school will be determined by measuring the shortest walking route. This is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. The route may also include footpaths, bridleways and other pathways. It is not necessary to determine whether a child would be able to walk that route in reasonable safety for the purposes of determining which is the nearest school. Where the schools are beyond the **statutory walking distance**, the nearest school will be determined by measuring the shortest **road route**.

The measurement of the shortest route is undertaken by the County Council's approved GIS system. This measuring tool is not publicly available so we advise using Google Maps to measure the distance as that will (except in the most marginal of cases) provide an outcome consistent with the distance measures undertaken by our version of the GIS measuring tool. Where the difference in distance calculations to two or more different educational establishments is very slight, i.e. 1 mile or less, please contact us for confirmation of your nearest educational setting prior to applying for free school transport. Our contact details are provided at section 19.

Definition of Home Address

For the purposes of school transport, the **home** address is deemed to be the child's main residence, i.e. where they live most of the time Monday to Friday. Where childcare is equally split between **parents** living at different addresses the provision of free school transport will only be provided from one address, assuming the eligibility criteria outlined in this policy is met. If both addresses meet the eligibility criteria, then it will be for the child's **parents** to agree which address is to be used for the purposes of providing free school transport. If they are unable to agree, then the Council will use the address which is closer to the school attended for transport eligibility purposes.

In some cases, the Council may be able to offer transport assistance through its concessionary travel scheme (see para 12) to those families where childcare is split between **parents** living at different addresses on alternative days or weeks. However, there is no guarantee of assistance and a charge will be made where we can offer transport support from more than one address.

Eligibility for free transport will not be assessed to/from a grandparents' address or a childminder's address. It is also the case that transport will not be provided to and from a grandparent's address or a childminder's address.

3.4. Home to school transport on the grounds of religion or belief

Northumberland County Council has a discretionary policy of providing free school transport for children attending a school outside of the **transport priority area** when the **parent** has expressed a preference for their child to be educated at a school with a particular ethos because they adhere to a specific faith, or **belief**. In Northumberland, free school transport will only be provided to the nearest faith school to **home** if it is of the same denomination to which the **parent** or child adheres to (e.g. Roman Catholic children attending a Roman Catholic school or Church of England children attending a Church of England school). However, a **parent** will need to satisfy the Council of the genuine nature of the religious **belief** and that the application is made in good faith. The burden of proof lies with the child's **parent/parents**. **Parents** are required to provide proof of faith by providing documentary evidence such as a baptismal certificate (at the point of submitting an application for school transport) and that such religious education is not available at the school located within the **transport priority area**. **Parents** who profess a philosophical **belief** in, for example, atheism or humanism are required to provide proof of such beliefs by providing documentary evidence if possible. In the absence of documentary evidence, the **parent** should provide a statement of atheism at the point of submitting an application for free school transport. This will then be taken into account when determining eligibility for free school transport. Only journeys considered to be reasonable by the County Council both in terms of journey times (see section 14.5) and the cost of provision will be considered.

3.5 Statutory Walking Distances

The **statutory walking distances** are over two miles for children under 8 years of age and over three miles for children aged 8 years and over. The measurement of **statutory walking distances** is determined by the shortest walking route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety. This is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. The route may also include footpaths, bridleways and other pathways. Northumberland County Council has chosen to extend the use of the two mile walking distance for all children up to the end of Year 4. There is no expectation that a child will walk. It is for the **parent** to determine what arrangements would be suitable for the child.

The walking distance is measured using the County Council's approved GIS system. Distance measures between **home** and school will be strictly applied. This means that in some cases pupils living in the same street or even adjoining properties may not all be eligible for free school transport.

Routes are measured from the **home** address main entrance that opens onto a road or street that is maintained at public expense to the main school entrance. Private driveways or roads not owned or maintained by Northumberland County Council are not included in the measurements.

Routes from **home** to school are regularly reviewed by the Local Authority. If a route from **home** to school is measured and found to be under the qualifying distance, free school transport will be withdrawn with a full school term's notice.

3.6 Safety of Walking Routes

A child will not normally be eligible for free travel to school on the grounds of their **special educational needs, disability** or **mobility problem**, or on the grounds that the route is unsafe, if they would be able to walk to school if they were accompanied. The circumstances that we would take into account may include, but are not limited to, whether the **parent** has a **disability** or **mobility problem** that would make it difficult for them to accompany their child.

Where the local authority determines that a child would be able to walk if they were accompanied, the general expectation is that the **parent** will accompany them or make other suitable arrangements for their journey to and from school. A child will not normally be eligible solely because of their **parent's** work commitments or the fact that they have other caring responsibilities (including having to get other children to different schools) means they are unable to accompany their child themselves. These apply to many **parents** and in most circumstances, the Local Authority expects the **parent** to make suitable arrangements to fulfil their various responsibilities (for example, their responsibilities as an employee and as a **parent**).

Decisions about the safety of walking routes follow the guidelines on the Assessment of Walking Routes issued by Road Safety GB. Such assessments address issues from a road safety perspective. They do not consider matters of personal security such as the safety issues

that could arise from children travelling alone. These are deemed to be the responsibility of **parents** to decide whether they need to accompany their child or not.

Where the Local Authority believes that there is no available walking route that is considered safe to walk, accompanied as necessary, free school transport may be provided for pupils living under the qualifying distance.

If the Local Authority assesses that a route is safe for a child to walk, accompanied as necessary, then **parents** are responsible for deciding how their child will travel to school, for making any necessary arrangements (e.g. to take account of work commitments etc.) to support this and for any costs. This may be in any way that the **parents** feel is appropriate for their child, e.g. walking, cycling or using a local bus service.

3.7 “Extended Rights to Transport” for Low Income Families

The Education & Inspections Act 2006 extended the right to receive free school transport to children from low income families where they are entitled to free school meals or whose **parents** are entitled to the maximum level of Working Tax Credit. The level of entitlement to Working Tax Credit is identified on the notice issued by HM Revenue and Customs. Proof of entitlement by means of the Working Tax Credit notice issued by HM Revenue and Customs should be submitted in its entirety with the transport application form. Children granted transport on the grounds of low income will remain eligible for the entirety of the **academic year** for which the assessment is made. In each subsequent year the child’s eligibility will be reassessed at the beginning of June.

A child may be eligible under this scheme if he/she is

- aged 8 years of age but under 11 years and who lives more than two miles from the school located within the **transport priority area** or nearest and appropriate **qualifying school**
- aged between 11 and 16 years of age in order to support their attendance at a school between two and six miles from their **home** and there are no more than two suitable nearer schools.
- aged between 11 and 16 years of age in order to support their attendance at the nearest school preferred by reason of their **religion or belief** over two miles up to a maximum distance of 15 miles.

3.8 Disabilities, Mobility Problems and/or Special Educational Needs.

Children with **disabilities** and/or **special educational needs** or **mobility problems** have the same entitlement to free school transport as any other child within the education system. Northumberland County Council's responsibility towards this group of children falls within the general duty outlined above in section 3.1-3.6. In addition, the County Council may also provide free school transport as a reasonable adjustment to a child’s **disability** in cases where the child lives within the **statutory walking distance** of the school.

- A person has a **disability** (s6 Equality Act 2010) if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

A child may also be eligible for free school transport under Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996 if they are of **compulsory school age**, attending a **qualifying school** within **statutory walking distance** and, as a result of their **disability, special educational needs or mobility problems**, they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the school (provided the local authority has not made arrangements for them to attend a **qualifying school** nearer their **home**).

It is the individual needs of each child, rather than whether an **EHCP** is held, that shall determine whether or how school travel arrangements are made. In deciding whether a child with a **disability** and/or a special educational need and/or **mobility problem** should be awarded free school transport, the County Council will have regard to the circumstances of the particular case and take account of the following factors:

- whether the **EHCP** says that a child needs to be at a school that is sufficiently far from their **home** for them that they have a transport entitlement;
- whether the child has physical, sensory or mental health needs which mean that they can't safely walk to school even if the school is nearby; and
- whether the child has needs which mean that they require particular transport arrangements to be put in place for them, e.g. travelling alone or under the care of a passenger assistant;

In such cases the Council will also consider:

- the distance between the child's **home** and school;
- the nature of the walking route between **home** and school which is available to the child;
- the nature of the child's **disability special educational needs or mobility problems**

3.8.1 Assessment of eligibility for children with Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs)

In the case of children with **EHCPs** or who are being assessed for an **EHCP**, the child's eligibility for free school transport will be considered by the appropriate SEND Officer when **parents** submit an application for school transport.

Each child's particular circumstances will be taken on their merits, following consideration of written evidence from professional sources such as occupational therapists, educational psychologists, paediatricians, GPs, consultants and social workers concerning the type and

extent of a child's physical, medical, sensory and developmental difficulties. In cases where it is clear that the child meets the eligibility criteria (i.e. they either attend their nearest suitable school that is located more than the **statutory walking distance** from their **home** address or they live within **statutory walking distance** of their nearest suitable school but qualify for free school transport on the basis of their **special educational needs, disability or mobility problem**), the appropriate transport arrangements will be put in place by the Passenger Transport team.

In such cases, consideration will also be given to:

- (i) what the appropriate form of transport should be in view of the child's circumstances; and
- (ii) the appropriateness of whether a passenger assistant should be provided

Adopting a triage approach to risk assessment will ensure that the core transport arrangements put in place will be sufficient for the vast majority of children accessing the school transport service. More child specific risk assessments will be required for a minority of children with more complex needs.

More information about travel to school for children with **special educational needs** and disabilities can be found in the Council's SEND [Local Offer](#)

4. Is Independent Travel Training provided for children with EHCPs?

A key aim in determining the form of travel assistance to be provided is increasing the independence of the child. Support put in place will be reviewed on a periodic basis in working toward increased independence. Reviews will consider whether the student still requires travel assistance and, if so, whether existing transport arrangements remain appropriate considering their age, development and increasing independence, or if an alternative support package would be appropriate for the student's developmental journey.

Included in the options that may be offered when considering travel assistance is Independent Travel Training. Northumberland County Council aspires to support all young people in Northumberland to achieve their potential. Our independent travel training programme teaches those with additional needs how to transition from taxi to using public transport, travelling independently and safely between **home** and their school, college, or workplace so that they can take steps toward living a fulfilled and independent life and access more opportunities as they get older.

The child, family, carers, school and Independent Travel Training team are closely involved

throughout the process during which an independent travel plan is co-produced prior to one-to-one training beginning. Upon completion of the two stage Independent Travel Training programme arrangements will be made for the child to transition confidently from taxi to public transport where continued support will be available from the Independent Travel Training team ensuring that the independence of the child is sustainable in the longer term, supporting an independent future.

More information can be found at:

[Independent Travel Training Leaflets](#)
[Guides to Independent Travel Training](#)

On a related matter, the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) entitles passholders who include people with a **disability** and resident in England to free off-peak travel on local bus services throughout England. Further details on eligibility criteria and how to apply for a disabled person's bus pass are available via [concessionary travel for disabled people](#)

5. What about school transport for pupils who are unable to attend a mainstream school?

Children of statutory school age who because of exclusion, illness or other reasons, are unable to attend mainstream provision may need alternative education programmes arranged for them through the Local Authority. Alternative Provision seeks to ensure children are catered for with clear education and training pathways which ultimately prevent them from falling into the NEET category (Not in Employment, Education or Training) post-year-11, the end of compulsory school education. The Council's Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) also falls under the Alternative Provision category and is a place where a child has to attend due to behavioural issues. Transport requests for children on such programmes are made on behalf of the children via the Council's Inclusion and EOTAS teams. Children attending alternative educational provision have the same entitlement to school transport as any other pupil within the education system.

6. What about school transport for Looked After Children placed with foster carers?

Arrangements for children who have been placed with foster carers may differ slightly, as the school attended by the child may be set by the Local Authority, which would make that school the nearest **qualifying school**. Whilst Northumberland County Council is clear that this policy applies to all Looked After Children, it will take account of their particular circumstances. Foster carers are advised to agree arrangements for the provision of transport to and from school with the child's social worker prior to placement.

7 What about school transport for Children from Armed Forces Families?

Northumberland County Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. It is a commitment that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Whilst Northumberland County Council is clear that this policy applies to all children from armed forces backgrounds, it will give special consideration in some cases where it is appropriate. Further information on the Armed Forces Covenant can be found [here](#).

8. My child attends a school outside of Northumberland. Will they qualify for free school transport?

Taking into account their particular needs, it may be appropriate in some cases for a child to be placed in an educational provision outside of Northumberland. In such cases, appropriate transport arrangements will be put in place following discussion with **parents** and the Council's **Special Educational Needs & Disabilities** Team. Children attending school daily will have school transport provided in accordance with the programme of attendance drawn up by the school concerned in consultation with the **parent** and the County Council. There will also be cases where a child will qualify for free transport to a school located in a neighbouring local authority area on the basis that it is the nearest school to their **home** address.

9. My child has been placed in residential provision. Will they qualify for free transport?

The general principles set out above in relation to the eligibility criteria also apply where the Council places a pupil in a residential school. The Council will provide transport to and from school if the pupil's needs are so significant and complex that it would compromise his or her health or safety to travel by public transport or the journey by public transport is so complex that it would not be reasonable to expect the child to undertake it accompanied by the **parent** if necessary. In exceptional circumstances, when no other suitable transport exists, **parents** may be asked to transport their child in their own car. Where a **parent** consents to such an arrangement, they will be paid a travel allowance as a contribution towards the costs incurred.

The Council will provide assistance with travel at the beginning and end of the week for weekly boarders and at the beginning and end of each half-term / term for half-termly / termly boarders.

10. Parental preference for a school

The general policy of the Council towards **parents** who express a preference for a place at a school other than their child's school located within the **transport priority area** for their **home** address is that the **parent**, in exercising such a preference, becomes wholly responsible for making home-school transport arrangements, unless the preferred school is closest to the

home address as measured by the County Council's approved GIS system. The same applies to children who have **EHCPs**, including those who attend special schools as well as children with **special educational needs**, a **mobility problem** or a **disability** but not an **EHCP**. **Parents** should be aware that transport will only be provided to a preferred school if that is the school located within the transport priority area for their **home** address or is the school that is the nearest to where they live which can meet any special needs which they have and is beyond the **statutory walking distance**. Information on school catchment areas used for school admission purposes and **transport priority areas** used to determine eligibility for school transport assistance can be found by using our [School Catchment and Transport Eligibility Maps](#)

In the case of a child with a **EHCP**, if the **parents'** preferred choice of school is further away from the child's **home** than another school that can meet the child's **special educational needs**, the Local Authority may agree to name the preferred school on condition that the **parent** agrees to take full responsibility for getting their child to and from school and for paying any costs that arise as a consequence of doing so for the entire time their child is at that school. In such cases the Council will name two schools in the **EHCP** - the nearer school and the **parents'** preferred choice of school - that are able to meet the child's needs.

11. Are there any exceptional circumstances where transport assistance is provided?

In exceptional circumstances, transport may be provided for other reasons such as a family placed in emergency accommodation following being made homeless, domestic abuse, or a parental **disability** or medical issue. Each individual request for transport assistance will be considered on its own merit and Northumberland County Council may, at its sole discretion, provide transport, without charge, for children falling outside the general policy. The County Council will seek on all occasions to take decisions that are in accordance with the relevant legislation, which constitute a reasonable response to the circumstances that pertain, and which take account of the resources that are available.

Any requests for transport within this category must be made in writing either by email or letter to the Passenger Transport Manager, Local Services, County Hall, Morpeth. NE61 2EF or email schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk. Children granted transport on the grounds of exceptional circumstances will have their entitlement regularly reviewed as appropriate, e.g., short term **medical needs** will be reviewed on a frequent basis.

12. Can I purchase a spare seat on a school transport vehicle for my child if they don't qualify for free travel?

Parents should bear in mind that if they enrol their child into a school other than their child's

school located within the **transport priority area** and which is not the nearest to their **home** their child is unlikely to qualify for free school transport.

There is sometimes spare seating capacity on contracted school transport vehicles arranged for pupils who meet the eligibility criteria, and we may be able to make these spare seats available to children not qualifying for free school transport for this reason. There is a charge for transport provided on this basis. We cannot guarantee that this will continue throughout a child's attendance at an establishment, as a seat may need to be withdrawn should it be needed for a child entitled to free school transport. A child can also be displaced if it becomes necessary to reorganise a route or hire a smaller vehicle. For such reasons families should not make school choices which rely on the availability of concessionary travel. In cases where a place needs to be withdrawn, refunds will be made on a pro rata basis.

The purchase of spare seats in return for a concessionary fare are subject to places remaining after all free and Post-16 transport applications have been processed. **Parents** cannot be advised as to whether their child has a place until late-September, at the earliest. It would be wise to make contingency arrangements for the beginning of the school year and never be solely reliant on the availability of a seat for the reasons outlined above. Further details of the Council's Concessionary Travel Scheme are provided in the "Your school transport questions answered" section of our [school transport webpage](#).

13. Occasions when transport is not provided or withdrawn

School transport will be permanently withdrawn with half a school term's notice (i.e. 6 weeks) where we discover we have made an error in the assessment of eligibility and have as a result awarded free school transport to a child.

There are also cases that due to a child's poor behaviour school transport is withdrawn either permanently or for a temporary period. Further details are provided further below at section 16.1.

Travel arrangements will not be made by the Council for a child who travels between education institutions during the **school day**. Where a child moves from one establishment to another in order to receive education, that cost will fall to the school with which the child is registered.

For the avoidance of doubt, the County Council will **not** provide transport for children: -

- To enable attendance at assessment days;
- To attend medical appointments (such as dental, hospital or General Practitioner appointments) More information on help available for low income families is provided via [HTCS](#);
- School-to-school placements. This is the responsibility of the school where the child is on roll.

- For pre-course visits, ‘taster’ days or parents’ evenings/visits
- For off-site educational visits, placements, work experience etc. - nothing other than transport at the normal start and finish time of the **school day**;
- In the event of sickness where a child has to be collected from school
- To get to school breakfast clubs
- To get **home** from after school activities/clubs
- To get to and from before and after school childcare, whether formal (for example, a childminder) or informal (for example, a grandparent).
- Or reimburse any costs incurred before an eligible application for transport is made to the Council and a reasonable time period (usually 20 working days) has elapsed to allow for an assessment of the application and implementation of travel arrangements.

In addition the County Council will not fund additional journeys or fund any extra routes which are undertaken by contracted transport providers following requests by **parents** without the prior approval of the County Council.

14 Transport Arrangements

14.1 What are the times of operation of school transport?

School transport will be provided in the morning at times which coincide with the normal start of the **school day** with a return journey in the afternoon following the normal end of the **school day**. The **school day** is deemed to be the session times, as approved by the governing body of the **qualifying school**. However, if a school has an earlier finish time one day a week school transport arrangements will normally operate at the times that are in place for the other four days of the school week. Where particular classes, year groups or pupils have a start or finish time that is different from most pupils at the school, it will not normally be possible for the local authority to make separate travel arrangements. Schools may need to make their own arrangements to accommodate these pupils.

14.2 Where will my child be picked up from in the morning and dropped off at in the afternoon?

Transport arrangements will operate to and from a reasonable proximity to the home address (typically no more than one mile), and where it is impractical for pupils to be dropped off and picked up on the school premises boarding and alighting arrangements will take place as close as is practically possible to the school site.

14.2 What type of transport assistance will be provided for children qualifying for free school transport?

The County Council will determine the most appropriate means of travel support between **home** and school for children qualifying for free school transport using the most economic form of transport available, with due regard to the pupil’s special needs, health and maturity.

Transport assistance may be by way of:

- walking passenger transport assistant;
- passenger transport assistant on public transport or on contracted school transport;
- independent travel training;
- schools using their own minibuses to transport pupils
- bus passes or travel cards to travel on public transport. (Bus passes may be usable at other times depending on the policies of the operator);
- contracted transport arranged and funded by the Council through the use of approved and pre-vetted licensed taxi, minibus and coach operators;
- travel allowance or a personal budget may be agreed where it offers the best use of public money which will result in **parents** being paid to transport their child themselves.
- Pay a cycle allowance to enable a child to cycle to school

Where bus passes or season tickets are provided on public transport, it will enable travel between two points with a particular bus company. School transport is only provided on the basis of a child travelling between the family **home** (or designated pick-up point) and the **qualifying school**.

Where an entitlement to free transport exists and no transport is available, **parents** who are willing to transport their own children to school may be awarded a travel allowance. Currently, the travel allowance will enable a **parent** to claim 45 pence a mile for two return journeys a day between **home** and school. The distance between **home** and school will be calculated using the Council's current version of its GIS measuring tool.

Very occasionally, the Council is unable to provide transport due to a child's medical condition or behaviour. In these situations, it may be able to offer a **parent** a Personal Transport Budget (PTB). A PTB is granted entirely at the discretion of the Local Authority and only provided where it is the most cost-effective option for Northumberland County Council to meet its statutory duties. It will therefore not automatically be given and is unlikely to be available where existing suitable transport is in operation locally. The PTB is a payment designed to help **parents** make any arrangements needed and can be used in any way to facilitate their child's access to school.

14.3 Will the transport arrangements put in place for my child change?

For all children, the County Council may decide to vary the provision of school transport in order to make effective use of resources or to meet the changing needs of a child. **Parents** will normally be given at least one week's notice of any such changes, though on some occasions this may not always be possible.

14.4 What happens if I am not at home or at the designated alighting point when my young child is dropped off?

Parent are expected to be at **home** or at the designated alighting point after school when the transport operator drops children off. Where a **parent** of a child of first school age is absent, transport operators are instructed to immediately contact the Council's Passenger Transport team and school for further guidance. Every effort will then be made to contact the family and arrange for them to collect their child. If this fails, then the child will be re-assured and kept on board the vehicle and never left alone. The operator will then continue with the school transport service so as not to delay the timely arrival **home** of other children on board the vehicle. Once all other children are dropped off, they will then make another attempt to return the child **home**. If there is still not a responsible adult at **home**, the operator is instructed to seek further advice from the Passenger Transport team or the child's school. As a last resort, the Children's Services Duty Social Worker may need to be contacted and the child may need to be taken to the nearest social services office that is open or police station. If a **parent** regularly failed to be available to collect their child then the travel assistance offered to their child would be withdrawn. Furthermore, the matter would be referred to the Children's Services Duty Social Worker.

14.5. How long will my child's journey to and from school be?

The County Council will make every effort to ensure that a child's **home** to school journey to an appropriate school is not too long. In general, the following maximum journey times apply:

- 90 minutes per day for first, primary and middle school age pupils (4-11)
- 150 minutes per day for middle and high school age students (11-16)

These times may be extended in some exceptional circumstances, for example where a child lives in a very remote location, or where a child needs to travel a long way to the school named in their EHC Plan, or when journey times are extended by road diversions. The County Council will make every reasonable effort to arrange transport within these times.

Children should be at pick-up points in the morning at least 5 minutes before pick-up times.

Every effort is made to ensure that waiting times on school premises are kept to the minimum. Waiting times should normally be no longer than 15 minutes.

14.6 Are passenger assistants provided on school transport?

The safety and welfare of children is the Council's priority. Where the Council has decided to provide transport, it will also, where considered necessary following risk assessment, provide a passenger assistant to supervise the pupil's journey. However, it is not normally the case that passenger assistants are provided on vehicles that transport children to mainstream schools

(the usual exception to this is to care for a child with **medical needs**). Where provided, the same driver and passenger assistant will be used on each route serving a special school as much as possible. The presence or otherwise of one or more passenger assistants will be dependent upon a number of factors, including the number of pupils being transported, their age and their needs.

15 Service Standards for Contracted School Bus, Taxi and Private Hire Operators

15.1 Is there a code of conduct for drivers and passenger assistants who are deployed on dedicated school transport contracts?

When transport is arranged by the County Council, the contractor will ensure that their drivers and (where deployed) passenger assistants:

- are in receipt of satisfactory enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks;
- are trained in how to evacuate the vehicle taking into account the needs of the passengers;
- carry visible photographic identification;
- have undertaken route familiarisation and are aware of the timetable, the pick up and drop off locations as well the names of the children boarding and alighting at each stop
- are aware of the nature of a child's **special educational needs** and disabilities and any special requirements that are in place as well as emergency contact information (required for children with special needs);
- do not eat, smoke, or drink alcoholic beverages on the vehicle or in the presence of pupils. They will not offer food or drink to pupils and pupils should not offer food or drink to each other. If they are observed doing so, the transport staff will take steps to stop it happening;
- pay particular attention to seating arrangements of himself/herself and children on the transport as agreed with the Council and the school that the children attend. The seating plan will take into account the needs of the children;
- are courteous and polite to children, their **parents** and school staff.

To help drivers and passenger assistants understand and fulfil their roles and responsibilities to the required standards they are issued with code of conduct booklets which along with other information can be found on our [Transport Operator Webpage](#)

15.2 Are taxi, private hire and school bus drivers licensed?

Taxi drivers are licensed through the relevant local authority once they are satisfied that they are a fit and proper person to hold such a licence. Each licensing authority will determine its own requirements that applicants must meet for them to issue a licence. The specific requirements for a Northumberland based taxi or private hire driver can be found [here](#) Bus

and coach drivers are required to hold a Driver's Certificate of Professional Competence. This requires them to undertake 35 hours of approved training every five years

15.3 What briefing & training is provided to drivers and passenger assistants?

The Council will ensure that drivers and passenger assistants receive appropriate briefing on a child's needs. More specifically, they will be provided with relevant information contained in a child's **EHCP**, information provided by their **parent** via the transport application process as well as by teaching staff, such as a **Special Educational Needs** Co-ordinator (SENCo) at the child's school to ensure the school transport service is delivered safely and appropriately. This information will relate to the child's needs as well as strategies that need to be taken to manage the child's behaviour on school transport.

All taxi and private hire drivers are required to attend "Child and Adult Sexual Exploitation Awareness Training" when they first apply for a licence. PSV drivers (drivers of vehicles with 9 passenger seats or more) and passenger assistants are required to attend the Council's rolling programme of **safeguarding** awareness training which each driver attends on expiry of their current DBS certificate which lasts for 3 years. If they are deployed on a contract involving the deployment of a wheelchair accessible vehicle, training on how to correctly load and secure a wheelchair and apply a passenger restraint is compulsory and will be provided by an accredited training provider at the contractor's expense. The Council also recommends that to its contracted transport providers that they provide their drivers and (where employed) passenger assistants with training in the handling of emergency situations, including basic life support skills.

For drivers and passenger assistants transporting children with **special educational needs and disabilities**, disability and autism awareness training is mandatory and is provided through an accredited training provider.

More child-specific training (which can involve the administration of rescue medication) is also provided by a child's paediatric nursing team usually to a passenger assistant but can include a driver as well for children with a diagnosis of epilepsy and/or diabetes. In such cases, parental consent is sought first before any training/briefing is arranged.

Other more bespoke training is provided to drivers and passenger assistants as and when required, e.g. Managing Challenging Behaviour.

15.4 Are vehicles deployed on school transport contracts licensed?

Taxis and private hire vehicles are required to pass an annual MOT test. They must also be

inspected by their local authority licensing team to ensure they meet required standards relating to roadworthiness, comfort and cleanliness, safety and security. Operators of buses and coaches must have a public service vehicles operator's licence issued by the [Traffic Commissioners](#). Vehicles must have an annual MOT test and operators are required to keep them in a roadworthy condition. They may be inspected by the [Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency](#). Community transport operators which are organisations that provide transport on a "not-for-profit" basis can apply for permits under section 19 or section 22 of the Transport Act 1985. These permits allow the holder to operate transport services for hire or reward without the need for a full public service vehicle operator's (PSV 'O') licence.

15.5 Are School buses fitted with seatbelts in the same way taxis and private hire vehicles are?

All minibuses, coaches and buses deployed on **dedicated** school transport contracts must be fitted with seatbelts. Vehicles deployed as public service buses with standing passenger provision do not have seatbelts fitted but are also used to transport children qualifying for such assistance to school. Where seat belts are fitted they must be worn by children. Failure to do so will result in the child's place in the vehicle being suspended until they agree to put the seatbelt on.

15.6 What arrangements are made to transport children to school who require access to wheelchair accessible vehicles?

The Council is concerned to ensure the health & safety of children who are transported in wheelchairs. It will take steps to ensure that its contractors deploy drivers and, where necessary, passenger assistants on its school transport contracts that know how to correctly secure wheelchair passengers in their vehicles and operate any specialist equipment including ramps and passenger lifts. Monitoring exercises will be undertaken on transport providers to ensure wheelchair passengers are transported safely.

Parents must supply and fit car seats or booster seats for their children in the vehicle if they are not required by law. Specialist child passenger harnesses (e.g. Crellings) will be fitted by the contractor's staff where a risk assessment identifies the need to fit one for a pupil. Where fitted on vehicles, childproof locks will be secured during the journey.

16 Behaviour on School Transport

Parents and children themselves are responsible for their behaviour on transport.

It is expected that each school will promote appropriate standards of behaviour by children on their journey to and from school. Legislation empowers head teachers to take action (including exclusion from school transport) to address unacceptable behaviour even though it takes place

outside the school premises.

Parents are required to confirm that they will make every effort to ensure their child behaves appropriately if they are awarded free transport following submission of an application for school transport. A leaflet outlining how pupils are expected to behave on home to school transport is issued to **parents** before places on transport are first allocated. Where a safety issue has been brought to the attention of the school, then the school must, in law, deal with it. Failure to do this would be negligent. For example, if a **parent** informed a school that children were regularly fighting on the journey and distracting the driver from their important task of driving safely and that this was happening once the vehicle left the school, the school must then take some action. For example, they must warn **parents** of the problem.

16.1 Withdrawal of School Transport

Children who misbehave on school transport may have their entitlement/travel pass removed from them. The withdrawal of the pass may be either temporary or permanent.

Depending on the nature of the first offence, a **parent** may receive an initial “warning” letter informing them of the misbehaviour of their child and reminding them of the standards of behaviour that children should display when accessing the school transport service. A further instance of misbehaviour is likely to result in a “final warning” letter being sent to their **parent** advising them that their child will be excluded from using the school transport service should they continue to misbehave. For more serious offences, exclusion from school transport may be immediate.

Temporary withdrawal of transport will be for a specified number of weeks whilst permanent withdrawal will mean exclusion for the remainder of the period that the child is in attendance at the school.

The withdrawal of transport, either temporary or permanent, shall not imply that travel arrangements were not necessary and should not be provided, but rather that the arrangements were necessary and had been made, but the child’s behaviour was such that they cannot take advantage of it.

In such circumstances, the **parent** will need to arrange and pay for their own transport in order to meet their duty to ensure that their child continues to attend school

17 Appeals Review Procedure

If a **parent** is refused free school transport for their child following an application, they will be advised via an auto-generated email of the reason for the refusal. The email will also inform them that they have the right to appeal this decision. The appeal process is a two stage procedure.

At Stage One, **parents** can challenge a decision about:

- Their child's eligibility
- The distance measurement in relation to **statutory walking distances**; or
- The safety of the route

In cases where the provision of free travel has been agreed by the County Council, **parents** also have the right to ask for a review of the transport arrangements offered.

Parents must set out clearly, in writing, why they believe that the County Council should reconsider their decision, enclosing any relevant information that may support their case. They may only request a review based upon their child's or their family's personal circumstances or the application of this school transport policy but not about the policy itself. If a **parent** wishes to contest the actual wording in the policy they should follow the complaints process as outlined in para 18 below.

A review of a **parent's** case will not normally be triggered or undertaken over the phone. It should be submitted either by letter or email. However, exceptions will be made to take account of a **parent's** learning **disability**. For example, hearing an appeal over the phone may be appropriate in the case of a **parent** who has dyslexia and doesn't feel confident to effectively articulate their appeal in writing. A **parent** should write setting out their reasons to the Passenger Transport Manager, County Hall, Morpeth NE61 2EF within 20 working days of the date on the email advising them that they have been refused free school transport or email: schooltransportappeals@northumberland.gov.uk. A **parent** will be advised of the outcome of the review in writing within 20 working days of the receipt of their correspondence. In responding to the appeal reference will be made to this school transport policy, information provided by the **parent** or professionals in support of their appeal as well as additional information provided to the Council by school staff or other professionals. If the **parent** wins their appeal, their child will be allocated school transport within 10-15 working days following the date on which they were informed of the decision. They will not be entitled to claim a refund on transport costs incurred before the date when their appeal was received. In the event of a decision being made to decline the appeal a reason(s) will be provided to explain why.

If a Stage One appeal is unsuccessful a **parent** can seek a Stage Two appeal. Details of how this process will work will be enclosed with the decision letter if the Stage One appeal confirms the original decision. A **parent's** case will be put before a panel for their consideration. The panel members are independent and impartial, i.e. they will not have previously been involved in considering the matter. They will not consider your application without the submission of relevant supporting information.

A **parent** should submit their appeal form within 20 working days of receipt of the Stage One written decision notification. They will receive correspondence confirming that their appeal form

has been received and advising them of the appeal date (which will be within 40 working days of receipt of a written request for a Stage Two appeal). Whilst a **parent** does not attend the hearing itself a **parent** can make verbal representation of their case to the chair of the Appeal Panel. A letter outlining the outcome of the Panel's decision will be sent to the **parent** within 5 working days of the appeal. In responding to the appeal reference will be made to this school transport policy, information provided by the **parent** or professionals in support of their appeal as well as additional information provided to the Council by school staff or other professionals. If the **parent** wins their appeal, then their child will be allocated transport within 10 working days following the date of the panel hearing. They will not be entitled to claim a refund on transport costs incurred before the date when their request for a panel review was received. In the event of a decision being made to decline the appeal a reason(s) will be provided to explain why. They will not be able to appeal again. If there have been significant and material changes in their circumstances that require a new decision, then a **parent** may make a separate application to the Council.

Further information and guidance in relation to the Council's school transport appeals process can be found via the [school transport webpage](#)

18 Complaints Procedure

A school transport complaint is a complaint about how the local authority has carried out (or failed to carry out) its transport responsibilities in relation to children and young people attending a mainstream or special school, alternative provision or further education college. It can also include the way a Stage One Appeal and Stage Two Review was undertaken. It can be made by a **parent** of a child who is, or will be, 4-16 years old at the relevant time. Any such complaints should be submitted to the Council under our Complaints Procedure which can be accessed via [Make a Complaint](#). However, any complaint solely about the outcome of the review will not be considered under this procedure, i.e. a **parent** can only complain about how the appeal was handled.

Complaints and appeals must first be taken up with the Local Authority and our appeals process and/or complaints process must be fully exhausted before a **parent** considers contacting the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The LGSCO is an independent organisation that looks into complaints against councils. A complaint to the LGSCO is justified where there is a "failure to comply with procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled".

Further information can be found at [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman/](#). Any complaint should outline the case, set out the decision taken by the local authority and include any other relevant documentation, for example any advice or decisions from the LGSCO where

appropriate.

19 Contact details for the Passenger Transport Team

The passenger transport team can be contacted by telephone 0345 600 6400 (Contact Centre) or 01670 624839 (Direct Line) or by email:

schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk for issues/enquiries relating to transport to mainstream schools &

SEN.Transport@northumberland.gov.uk for issues/enquiries relating to transport to special schools

20 School transport application process

20.1 Timeframe for processing applications

Applications are processed in two stages. Stage one is determining eligibility. Officers will decide if there is an entitlement under the policy and aim to reach a decision within 10 working days of receiving an application. Stage two involves determining which mode of travel is appropriate. This can typically take up to 10 working days once transport has been authorised by a designated officer. This is to allow time if necessary for the council to secure transport via a fair and open tendering process. In addition, some children will have a risk assessment completed to ensure the travel arrangements meet their needs. Whilst every effort will be made to organise free travel as quickly as possible, you will need to get your own child to/from school at your expense until we confirm details of the transport arrangements.

A **parent** can submit an application via [pre-16 school transport application \(for children attending mainstream schools only\)](#)

A **parent** can submit an application via [pre-16 school transport application \(for children with EHCPs attending either a special school or a mainstream school\)](#)

21 Replacing lost or damaged bus passes

If your child has lost or damaged their bus pass you will have to replace it at your own cost. If it is a bus pass produced by Northumberland County Council, please contact us via schooltransport@northumberland.gov.uk

For passes issued for travel on Arriva contact the business administration team at Arriva via

studentsne@arriva.co.uk and for Go North East passes contact Go North East Customer Services on 0191 420 5050

22 Policy changes

The Council reserves the right to make minor amendments or corrections to this policy without consulting on them. Where proposals to change the policy may affect children's eligibility for free school transport, we will consult for a minimum of 28 days during term time. Consultees will include schools, parents of children who will (or may) be affected by the proposed changes, including those whose children attend school in a neighbouring authority, and those whose children may be affected in the future. Wherever possible, changes will be phased in 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.

23 Glossary

Academic year:

Is defined by The School Information (England) Regulations 2008 as a period commencing with 1st August and ending with the next 31st July.

Available route:

A route will be "available" if it is a route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school.

Belief

Defined by section 509AD (3) of the Education Act 1996 as any religious or philosophical belief. A reference to belief includes a reference to lack of belief.

Compulsory school age:

Set out in section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and The Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998. A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday, or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they reach age 16

Dedicated Transport

Transport which exclusively carries children and young people to and from their place of education and cannot be boarded by members of the public

Disability

Defined in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010. A person has a disability if they have (a) a physical or mental impairment, and (b) that impairment has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A chronic physical or mental health condition may constitute a disability. Not all disabilities are visible.

Education Health and Care Plan

An Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has special educational needs or a disability. It is drawn up by the local authority after an EHC needs assessment of the child or young person has determined that an EHC plan is necessary, and after consultation with relevant partner agencies. Home-to-school travel arrangements are not normally considered to be special educational provision. In exceptional cases travel arrangements may be deemed to constitute special educational provision because they fulfil an education or training function. In these circumstances the travel arrangements should be recorded in section F of the EHC plan. Travel costs can also be provided as part of a Personal Budget, where one is agreed and included in the EHC plan as part of the special educational provision. This should be recorded in section J of the plan.

Home

The place where a child is habitually and normally resident. The Council makes clear in this policy how we will determine a child's home address for the purposes of assessing their eligibility for free school transport, including in circumstances where their parents do not live together and the child spends part of the week with each parent.

Medical Need

A health need that has the potential to put a child's safety or wellbeing at risk while travelling to and from school

Mobility problems

A physical impairment that impacts a child's ability to walk to school.

Normal Admissions Round

The period during which parents apply for school places. The deadlines for applications are 31 October for secondary school places and 15 January for primary places. Places are offered to parents on National Offer Day. Secondary National Offer Day is 1 March, or the next working day. Primary National Offer Day is 16 April, or the next working day.

Parent

References to parent in this document include birth parents, adoptive parents, foster parents,

carers or legal guardians with parental responsibility

Private Hire Vehicles

May carry up to 8 passengers and can only be pre-booked via a licensed private hire vehicle operator. See also the definition of taxi below

Religion

Section 509AD (3) of the Education Act 1996 defines religion as any religion. A reference to religion includes a reference to lack of religion. See also definition of belief above.

Road Route

A route passable by a motor vehicle

Safeguarding

Defined in Keeping Children Safe in Education as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing the impairment of their mental and physical health and development
- ensuring they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

School Day

Schools are responsible for deciding when their school day will start and end. This policy makes clear that school transport will be arranged for eligible children to enable them to attend for the 'normal' school day.

SEND Local Offer

Sets out, in one place, information about the provision local authorities expect to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people in their area who have Special educational needs or are disabled, including those who do not have an EHC plan. Further information can be found in the Special Education Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 – 25 Years.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Defined in section 20 of the Children and Families Act 2014. A child or young person has special educational needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her

Taxis

Also known as hackney carriages, black cabs and cabs. May carry up to 8 passengers. May be pre-booked or can be hired immediately by hailing on the street or at a rank. See also definition of private hire vehicle above.

Transport Priority Area:

The geographical area that Northumberland County Council uses to help determine eligibility for free school transport. Most Northumberland schools have a **transport priority area**. Children attending a school outside their **transport priority area** will not normally receive free transport. For a small number of academies, foundation schools and voluntary aided schools, the admissions policy may include reference to a catchment area that is different to the **transport priority area** designated by the Local Authority for school transport purposes. Information on school catchment areas used for school admission purposes and **transport priority areas** used to determine eligibility for free school transport can be found by using our [school catchment and transport eligibility maps](#)

Statutory walking distance:

Either two miles (if the child is under 8 years old), or three miles (if the child is 8 years old or older, though the two mile threshold is extended until a child finishes Y4 in Northumberland). This is measured by the “nearest available route”. The route is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety.

Qualifying school:

These community schools, foundation schools, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools; academies (including those which are free schools, university technical colleges, studio schools and special schools); alternative provision academies; community or foundation special schools; non-maintained special schools; pupil referral units; maintained nursery schools (where attended by a child of compulsory school age); and city technology colleges and city colleges for the technology of the arts

Working Tax Credit (WTC) and Universal Credit

It is a state benefit in the United Kingdom made to people who work and have a low income.

Working Tax Credit is being phased out as claimants are transferred onto Universal Credit. This does not change the way eligibility for extended rights to free travel to school is determined. It remains the case that children will be eligible for free school transport if they are eligible for free school meals or live with a parent who receives maximum Working Tax Credit (and meet the eligibility criteria set out in this policy). Once the roll out is complete, no further children will come forward who are eligible because their parents claim maximum Working Tax

Credit. No child will cease to be eligible for extended rights because of the roll out of Universal Credit. Parents who claim maximum Working Tax Credit will have an earned income of no more than £7,400. This means their children will become eligible for free school meals (if they are not already) when they (the parent) are transferred to Universal Credit. More information about eligibility for free school meals is available in Free School Meals: guidance for local authorities, maintained schools, academies and free schools.