

POLICY FOR TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING SCHOOL 2022/2023

1. INTRODUCTION

Croydon Council is committed to ensuring that every child, young person and family in Croydon leads independent, healthy lives, feeling safe, secure and achieving their full potential.

The aim of this policy is that all children and young people should lead lives that are independent and as free from restriction as possible thus contributing to the five outcomes for children and young people

- To be healthy;
- To stay safe;
- To enjoy and achieve;
- To make a positive contribution; and
- To achieve economic well-being.

1.1 This policy explains:

- Who is eligible for assistance from the London Borough of Croydon to travel to and from school.
- How applications for travel assistance are made and assessed.
- What kind of travel assistance may be provided.
- The Council's transport service standards.

The policy is intended to provide clarity for parents/carers and to ensure that children and young people with particular and significant needs are appropriately supported. If Croydon Council agrees to provide travel assistance it will be provided in a safe manner taking account of the child or young person's specific needs and with regard to the best use of the Council's resources.

Wherever possible, in the provision of travel assistance, the Council will consider travel options for 'eligible children and young people' that lead to reducing the number and length of vehicle journeys.

1.2 The policy explains the background relating to the provision of travel assistance by the Council for children and young people living within the boundaries of the London Borough of Croydon or in the care of the Council and describes how the policy applies to:

- Children with an Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- Children aged 5-16 without an EHCP.

1.3 The council has a Post-16 School Travel Assistance Policy which is available at <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/education/school-travel>:

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly under s.444 of the Education Act 1996 (as amended). This includes arranging any necessary travel arrangements to and from school and/or accompanying their child as necessary. No dispensation will be made for parents who are working at the time their children travel to and from school or who take other children to other schools at the time their children travel to and from school. In both cases parents are expected to make other suitable arrangements for someone else to accompany their children as necessary.

2.2 Under the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006), local authorities have a duty in certain circumstances to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary in order to secure that suitable home to school travel arrangements are made for the purpose of facilitating a child's attendance at relevant educational establishments for children aged 5-16.

2.3 In addition, local authorities also have a duty to facilitate access to full-time education for young people aged 16-19 and this may include assistance with travel in certain circumstances. Details of the support available to those over the age of 16 are found in the Post-16 School Travel Assistance Policy.

2.4 There is no statutory entitlement to travel assistance for children under 5. Children of pre-school age will not be provided with travel assistance other than in exceptional circumstances.

2.5 The provision of travel assistance by the Council will be based on individual needs and circumstances and with regard to the efficient use of resources. As a general rule, the Council believes that the majority of children and young people will be able to travel on free public transport.

2.6 In support of this policy, the Council works with schools to provide safe travel routes to and from school, to encourage sustainable methods of transport, including walking and cycling, and to encourage all forms of independent travel by children and young people wherever possible and practicable.

2.7 This policy has been developed with full regard to the Department for Education Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00224737/home-school-travel-transport>

3. TRAVEL ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE LIVING OUTSIDE STATUTORY WALKING DISTANCE

- 3.1 Travel assistance will be provided under this policy for:
- 1) Primary school aged children (5-11) who are registered pupils at a “qualifying school” where the school is more than 2 miles from their home address (up to 8 years of age) or 3 miles (aged 8 and over), and where no suitable arrangements have been made by the local authority for enabling the pupil to attend a school nearer to his home.
 - 2) Secondary school aged pupils of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a “qualifying school” where the school is more than 3 miles from their home address, and where no suitable arrangements have been made by the local authority for enabling the pupil to attend a school nearer to his home.
- 3.2. A “qualifying school” is a community, foundation or voluntary school or special school, a non-maintained special school, a pupil referral unit, a maintained nursery school or an Academy.
- 3.3. For a child with special educational needs, an independent school is also a qualifying school if it is the only school named in the child’s Education, Health and Care Plan , or it is one of two or more schools named in that plan and of those schools it is the nearer or nearest to the child’s home.
- 3.4. The local authority expects parents who choose a school which is not the nearest school that the Council considers to be suitable to take full responsibility for transporting their children to and from school.

4. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN WITHIN STATUTORY WALKING DISTANCE BASED ON NATURE OF THE ROUTE

- 4.1 Travel assistance will be provided to children who live within statutory walking distance of the school, where no suitable arrangements have been made to enable him to attend a school nearer to his home, and who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of the nature of the route.
- 4.2 In assessing the nature of the route, the local authority will consider factors such as the age of the child, the route in question, visibility, crossing points and all other factors that go to the nature of the route. The local authority will, consider whether any potential risks would be mitigated if the child is accompanied by an adult.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of parents to accompany their child to school where it is reasonably practicable to do so. The local authority expects parents to either accompany children to school themselves if a child cannot walk in safety or take public transport on their own, or to make arrangements for another adult to accompany the child. It is only where it is not reasonably practical for a child to be accompanied that the nature of the route will be assessed without an accompanying adult.

5 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE WITH AN EDUCATION HEALTH AND CARE PLAN (EHCP), DISABILITY OR MOBILITY ISSUES.

- 5.1 Where no suitable arrangements have been made by the local authority to enable a pupil to attend a school nearer his home, travel assistance will be provided for pupils living within statutory walking distance of their school who, because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems, cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school.

- 5.2 In considering whether a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school, the local authority will consider whether the child can walk to school on their own or with someone to accompany them. As set out above, the local authority expects parents to either accompany a child to school themselves or make arrangements for another adult to accompany the child. Wherever possible the Council expects parents/carers of children to make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as for parents/carers of children without an EHCP or disabilities as this is an important factor in developing the child's or young person's independence, social and life skills.
- 5.3 The local authority reserves the right to make an assessment to determine eligibility for travel arrangements.
- 5.4 The majority of children with an EHCP will not receive specialised travel assistance from the Council. The completion of an EHCP does not confer an automatic entitlement to the provision of travel assistance by the Council.

6 CHILDREN FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

- 6.1 For children from low income families (those who are entitled to free school meals or who are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credits) the eligibility criteria are varied as follows:
- For children between the ages of 8 years and 11 years from low income families, who attend the nearest qualifying school more than two miles from their home (where the local authority has not made any suitable arrangements to become a registered pupil at a qualifying school nearer his home);
 - For children of compulsory school age over the age of 11 from low income families if they attend one of their nearest three relevant educational establishments where those schools / establishments are between 2 miles (measured using the shortest walking route) and 6 miles (measured using the shortest driving route) from the family home;
 - For children of compulsory school age over the age of 11 from low income families if they attend the nearest school / establishment preferred by reason of a parent's religion or belief up to a maximum of 15 miles from the child's home.

7 OTHER FACTORS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION

- 7.1 Any wish of the parent for the pupil or young person to be educated or trained at an establishment in which the religious education provided is that of the religion or denomination to which the parent adheres.
- 7.2 Any disability of the parent/carer or the child. The local authority is under a duty to make reasonable adjustments if the usual application of this transport policy places a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled. For example, a disabled parent may not be able to accompany a child to school, and adjustments may need to be made so that the child is eligible for assistance. A disabled pupil may need reasonable adjustments to be made to the kind of transport that is provided. In such cases, a parent/carer/ pupil will be required to provide medical or other supporting evidence with their application.
- 7.3 Any other exceptional circumstances applicable to each case – see Appendix A.

8 FACTORS NOT TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION

- 8.1 When assessing eligibility for travel assistance, the Council, in common with other local authorities will generally not take the following factors into account:
- Personal circumstances such as parents/ carers attending work, taking other children into other schools or looking after other children;
 - Personal circumstances when considering collection and drop off points
 - Travel assistance will not generally be provided to facilitate attendance at non-statutory school activities that do not form part of the national curriculum, such as breakfast or after school clubs; or for any type of appointments including medical or any other specialists; or if the child or young person has to be collected from school because of illness; or due to exclusion or for any other reason. The Council's policy on the provision of travel assistance for additional journeys is described in more detail at appendix B.

9 WHAT TRAVEL ASSISTANCE MAY BE OFFERED

- 9.1 Although options for travel assistance will be determined by the needs of the child or young person, the efficient use of resources (including routing) will be a key consideration.
- 9.2 All children and young people up to the age of 16 (up to 18 if in full time education) are entitled to free travel on buses and trams within London with a valid travel card. The Council regards this provision as sufficient to meet the travel needs of the majority of children and young people under the age of 19. A travel card can be obtained by either:
- Downloading an application form from the Transport for London website; or
 - Calling into any ticket retailer for an application form.

There may be a small number of children and young people who are eligible for assistance, where it is necessary to travel to and from school using train services. In these cases a travel card may be provided.

- 9.3 It is the Council's decision as to what form of other travel assistance is suitable if required. Travel assistance will usually only be provided for the beginning and end of the school day or in line with the beginning and end of the week / term commissioned in residential schools.
- 9.4 A child boarding on a weekly basis where the school is closed at weekends will have a transport offer available at the beginning and end of the school week, other periods of closure and during term time only. A termly placement where the school is not closed at weekends will have a transport offer limited to the start and end of the school term, half terms and for periods of whole school closure only. Any other journeys required will be the responsibility of parents including attendance at annual reviews, additional home visits at weekends or any other time.
- 9.5 Once the child's / young person's eligibility for travel assistance has been agreed, the Council will decide what type of assistance will be provided. This decision will be based on the identified needs of the individual child or young person and will take account of the Council's duties to make the best use of its resources. It should be noted that the mode of travel assistance offered will be reviewed at least annually and may change as the

needs of the child or young person change as well as in the interests of ensuring the best use of the Council's resources.

9.6 The Council will always consider forms of travel assistance that help to develop travel independence skills to enable children and young people to lead independent lives as they grow older.

9.7 The options that will be considered when assessing the travel assistance that will be provided will include, but are not limited to:

- **Independent travel training:** Independent travel training, focused on the needs and capabilities of a young person, can increase independence by developing personal, social and life skills. By working closely with parents/carers, the child or young person and the school, travel training will contribute to greater independence for the child or young person and thus will always be given priority as an option when considering suitable solutions.

Independent travel training will increase young people's resilience against bullying and abuse when using public transport because they will not be marked out as "different" which many of them are concerned about. Criteria for successful completion of the training are based on an agreed rigorous training programme and assessment process undertaken by a qualified Travel Trainer. A copy of the final assessment will be provided to parents/carers. Successful completion of Independent Travel Training will be signed-off by the Council and will normally result in the withdrawal of any form of travel assistance.

- **Travel pass:** To enable the child to travel to school accompanied if necessary, by an adult via public transport solutions other than the free London bus scheme.
- **Personal Travel Budget (PTB):** It may be possible for the Council to provide parents/carers with an amount of money to create and manage personalised travel arrangements that best and most flexibly suit the needs of their child and family. The decision to provide a PTB will be that of the Council and agreed PTB will be based on the lowest cost form of travel assistance that is available and relevant to the child. It is parents' responsibility to ensure that travel provided is safe and accessible and that school attendance is maintained. A PTB can be refused if these conditions are not met.
- **Transport vehicles:** Where assessed as essential, the Council may provide a vehicle to transport a child or young person to and from school. Where transport vehicles are provided, these will be either Council vehicles and drivers or those provided by a suitably qualified, registered commercial provider working to contractual standards set by the Council.

Whenever possible, children will travel together in buses. These will be specially adapted to meet the needs of those travelling on them. Each route will be planned on the basis of school start and finish times and the shortest possible route for all children travelling on a particular vehicle.

The Council currently offers both a "home to school service" for children and young people in receipt of vehicle transport as well as utilising appropriate safe and convenient 'collection points' at reasonable

distances to and from family homes. The home to school service will only be agreed where it is deemed essential due to the child or young person's particular needs. This will normally be on the basis of one pick up point / address and one drop off point / address per day.

- **Taxis and private hire vehicles:** Under very exceptional circumstances the Council may transport pupils in separate taxis or private hire vehicles based on the assessed needs of the child or young person. Arrangements of this kind will be kept under regular review and, where possible, the opportunity will be taken to move to an alternative suitable form of travel assistance.

10 VEHICLE TRANSPORT SERVICE STANDARDS AND PROVISION OF PASSENGER ASSISTANTS

- 10.1 The vehicle transport service provided by the Council for children and young people will operate to the service standards described at Appendix C.
- 10.2 In exceptional circumstances a Passenger Assistant may be provided to accompany pupils to school on transport provided by the Council.
- 10.3 Passenger Assistants will only be provided where they are necessary for the safe operation of vehicles and/or the care of children or young people. A Passenger Assistant will not be provided simply because of the child or young person's age or because he/she does not know the driver.

11. APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS (ALL APPLICANTS)

11.1 Applications for travel assistance will be given full consideration to the specific needs of the child or young person. Where it is decided travel assistance is appropriate it will be implemented within 20 working days from the date of the application and reviewed regularly or at least annually.

11.2 The application process is dealt with in three stages.

Stage 1: Application

For all applicants the parent/carer must make a formal application for travel support before any assistance is considered. Supplementary supporting evidence may be required from parents at this stage. You can apply online at <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/education/school-travel>

Stage 2: Assessment

This stage will include the evaluation of written evidence and family circumstances. This may include a home visit, assessment of suitability for independent travel training and consultation with the child or young person's school/caseworkers and any other relevant specialists.

This stage will normally be completed within 10 working days following receipt of the application form, depending on the complexity of the circumstances. If further evidence is required or requested this may delay the process. Parents/Carers will be notified in writing if this is the case. It is possible at this stage that the application may be declined. Parents/carers will be notified of the decision and informed of the appeals process if the application has been declined.

Stage 3: Implementation

In cases where a decision is made to provide travel assistance it is for the council to allocate what type of travel assistance would be suitable and appropriate to meet the needs for each individual child or young person. The travel assistance allocations are described in 3.8 above. Every child or young person who is eligible for travel assistance will have a personalised travel plan completed for them. This document provides our travel service with more detailed information about the child's needs and enables us to identify how we can support them towards becoming an independent traveller wherever possible.

The most suitable form of travel assistance will normally be implemented within 10 working days following the completion of the assessment stage. If a parent/carer does not accept the travel assistance allocated their application will be withdrawn and they will take responsibility for their child's attendance at school themselves.

In some cases travel assistance will be granted on a time limited basis and a reapplication or submission of further information will be required in order to secure continued assistance.

Travel Assistance Reviews

11.3 All children and young people's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed regularly or at least annually. For children and young people with EHCPs, their continued eligibility for travel assistance will also be discussed at the child or young person's school as part of the annual review of statement. Parents/carers should attend the review in order to consider whether or not travel assistance continues to be appropriate. Where travel assistance has been granted on a time-limited basis further information will be sought prior to the end of the agreed assistance period to enable a timely review to take place. The Council may also review eligibility for travel assistance by means of a scheduled meeting or via telephone contact. If parents/carers do not participate in these reviews it may result in travel assistance being withdrawn. Parents will be informed of all decisions in writing, notifying them of the right to appeal.

11.4 Travel assistance will also be reviewed when there is a significant change in circumstances, such as a change in home address or a change in the child's or young person's needs. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the Council immediately of any changes that may affect the provision of travel assistance.

11.5 Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next half school term / school term or sooner where possible.

Cessation of Support

11.6 The Council will review and remove travel assistance from families where it is proven that assistance was obtained via a fraudulent application, or where the child or young person's individual circumstances have changed and either the child or young person is no longer eligible for support, or the child or young person has been assessed as not requiring such support. It may also cease on the written request of the parent/carer who, if necessary, has made alternative arrangements for their child's or young person's travel to school.

Transport Charges For Children Or Young People That Are NOT Eligible for Travel Assistance

11.7 In some exceptional circumstances the Council may agree to provide transport to a non-entitled child. In these circumstances a charge will be made by the Council. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- A sibling of an eligible child or young person attending the same school; or
- A child or young person whose application has been rejected but whose parent/carer wishes them to be transported.

11.8 Where the Council agrees to transport children or young people who are not eligible for travel assistance under this policy on a vehicle provided by the Council, it will only be where a space is available on a pre-existing route, subject to a risk assessment, and the charge will be worked out on a 'per seat' basis.

11.9 The Council cannot guarantee the availability of a seat on a route and where transport is provided it may be withdrawn where it is required for an eligible child or young person following 10 working days' notice.

Appeals

11.10 If an application for travel assistance is not approved by the Council, or the parent/carer disagrees with the type of assistance being offered, parent/carers have a right of appeal. The appeal should be made in writing within 20 days of the decision letter being received by the parents/carers.

11.11 Appeals are administered in 2 stages:

Stage 1: Review by Deputy Head of Independent Travel – Place Department

Within 5 working days of the appeal form being received, the parent/carer will be sent confirmation that their appeal has been received and that their appeal is under review.

Further evidence may be requested to support the appeal and consultation with other professional bodies may be required. Stage 1 appeals are decided by the Head of Independent Travel. Parents should receive their decision letter within 20 days of their appeal form being received.

Stage 2: Independent Panel - Independent review of evidence

If the parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they should notify the Council in writing within 20 days of receiving their Stage 1 appeal decision.

The appeal will then be considered independently of the service and will involve consideration of all evidence gathered and the reasons for the decision being made. This will be undertaken by the “Independent Panel” constituted by a mix of panel members independent of the process to date and suitably experienced.

Parents/carers should receive their decision letter within 40 days of their appeal being received.

This decision is the final stage of the Council’s appeal procedure in relation to travel assistance. If parents/carers remain dissatisfied they can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Details can be provided by the Council if necessary.

During the appeals process no new travel assistance will be provided or, in the case of existing arrangements, no change will be implemented.

If after the appeal, transport is agreed, it will commence from the date of the letter sent to the parent / carer. No backdated payments will be made nor will the Council accept any claims by parents/carers for costs incurred (e.g. for making alternative transport arrangements) during the process of appeal.

Complaints

Once travel assistance has been agreed any concerns regarding the provision of the service should be made in the first instance to the Travel Assistance case Manager at samer.adbis@croydon.gov.uk or 07922582011

All complaints on the process for assessing eligibility for transport provision will be handled through the Council’s formal complaints process. Full details are available on the [Council’s website](#). Any complaints regarding the outcome of the assessment process will be addressed as part of the appeals process as described under section 11.11 above.

Appendix A: Definitions/Additional Information

Change of School Day: Provided that governing bodies of Local Authority maintained schools have followed the procedures for change laid down in the Education (No 2) Act 1988 (Section 21) (and that governing bodies of other schools have taken full account of those procedures, as advised by the then Secretary of State), the London Borough of Croydon will seek to rearrange transport accordingly. However, if additional costs are involved, the Council reserves the right to make arrangements for all or part of those costs to be charged to the school concerned. **It should be noted that examination timetables do not constitute a change in the school day.**

Exceptional circumstances: the following are examples of 'exceptional circumstances'; a student that has been temporarily moved out of their home due to violence or eviction, a child that has been excluded from school and a new place has been negotiated, a student for whom a managed move has been negotiated, pupils in their final year of primary or secondary school who move houses. Each case will be considered on its own merits, examples listed here are not exhaustive and do not automatically qualify for travel assistance.

Home address: the address where the child resides. Where a child spends time with both parents/carers in separate homes and both have parental responsibility, the Council will need to establish where the majority of school nights (Sunday to Thursday) are spent and treat that as the home address. Home to School transport is not provided to alternative addresses e.g. grandparents, child-minders. Any change in transport remains the decision of the Council.

Low income families: Children whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit or children who are entitled to free school meals.

Relevant educational establishment: Section 508 B10 of the Education Act 1996 defines a relevant educational establishment as either a qualifying school or places (other than schools) where a child is receiving education by virtue of the arrangements made under section 19 (1) of the Act. Qualifying schools are community, foundation or voluntary schools; community or foundation special schools, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units, maintained nursery schools or city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts or Academies.

Standard journey times prior to assistance being offered:

Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.

Statutory school age: children and young people aged from five years of age up to the last day of the school year when they reach 16 years of age;

Statutory walking distance: statutory walking distance is two miles for pupils aged up to eight and three miles for those aged eight and over. The statutory walking distance is measured by the shortest route along which a child accompanied as necessary may walk with reasonable safety. Walking routes are measured using EMS or Google Maps system which utilise pathway mapping.

Appendix B: Additional Journeys for where transport has already been agreed

1. **Introduction.** This Appendix explains the Council's policy for the provision of Travel Assistance for journeys additional to the normal provision at the beginning and end of the normal school working day.
2. **School Trips.** Home to school transport timings may be adjusted by the Council on request from schools to take account of connections with the departure/ arrival of educational or recreational school trips. Schools must notify such requests to the Council as early as possible to enable an assessment of any additional costs to be made. Where adjustments in timings would result in additional transport costs to the Council, schools will need to take this into account in the planning of school trips, and such costs must be reimbursed to the Council as part of the school's costing arrangements for the whole trip.
3. **Examinations.** Home to school transport timings may be adjusted to take enable early departure from school when students are undertaking national examinations. However, to avoid unnecessary additional costs it is expected that such journeys will be co-ordinated and schools may be asked to retain students for reasonable periods at school after examinations to enable this.
4. **Work Experience.** Transport will not normally be provided to enable students to undertake work experience.
5. **Induction Days/ 'Taster Days'.** Transport will be made available for entitled children attending Induction Days or 'Taster Days' at the Council's Special Schools and resourced provisions. Transport may also be provided for entitled children attending Induction/'Taster Days' at Independent Schools where such a school has been named by the Council in the child's EHCP and there is no other school closer to the child's home that can meet the child's needs.
6. **Breakfast Clubs/After School Clubs.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend breakfast clubs/ after school clubs that do not fulfil part of the school curriculum, except where transport to/from such clubs can be provided without additional cost to the Council.
7. **Illness at School.** Transport will not normally be provided for students who are taken ill at school to enable them to return home. This is a parental or school responsibility.
8. **Medical/Dental Appointments.** Transport will not be provided or adjusted to enable students to attend medical or dental appointments. This is a parental responsibility.
9. **Detentions.** Transport will not be provided to take children home after detentions. This is a parental responsibility.
10. **Short Breaks / Respite.** Where it has been agreed, transport will be provided to and from school for children attending Short Breaks within the Borough. By agreement with the Council, transport will also be provided to and from school for Looked After Children from/to a temporary alternative home address to facilitate respite breaks for carers.
11. **College Attendance Whilst Registered at School.** For older children who spend a whole day at college or become dual-registered at the college whilst still being a registered pupil at a school, travel arrangements on those days can normally be adjusted to set down and pick up at the college. Transport arrangements for journeys during the school day to attend college placements are the responsibility of the school at which pupils are registered (for pupils with statements of SEN or EHCPs this will be the school named on the EHCP).

Appendix C: Vehicle Transport Service Standards

1. Croydon Transport Services is responsible for arranging and overseeing all methods of travel assistance provided to pupils with or without a statement of SEN. Travel assistance will be provided according to school commissioning arrangements (e.g. daily, fortnightly, or in the case of 52 week provision at the start and end of the placement only). This includes, but is not limited to;
 - Processing of new applications
 - Contacting parents/carers following the assessment process
 - Implementing agreed assistance, e.g. allocating suitable routes
 - Reviews of travel assistance
 - Managing provider contracts
 - Managing framework contract with licensed taxi providers
 - Day to day amendments/queries relating to travel assistance
 - Monitoring of transport providers
 - Investigating and responding to complaints
2. The service standards described below act as guidance and clarity for the service users for whom travel assistance is provided. Underlying these standards is the principle that, if the London Borough of Croydon agrees to provide travel assistance, it will be provided in a safe, suitable and cost effective manner, taking account of the child's specific needs and with regard to the best use of the Council's resources.

Vehicles

- All transport will be provided in accordance with contractual standards and legislation.
- All vehicles will be properly licensed in accordance with local regulation and national legislation
- The Council will conduct regular monitoring of quality and service standards on all vehicles by the Council or its contractors.
- Vehicles will have specialist wheelchair access and wheelchair restraint systems where necessary.
- All vehicles will be road worthy, clean inside and out, fitted with seat belts and carry emergency equipment i.e. fire extinguisher and first aid kit and any other equipment/notices required by law, e.g.: children sign on front and back of vehicle.

Transport Service Personnel

Passenger Assistants

- The Council may provide a Passenger Assistant for children and young people who have severe physical or learning difficulties, challenging behaviours and anti-social behaviours where the child's safety requires it, this will be determined during the assessment phase.
- Where large numbers of children travel together, more than one Passenger Assistant may be provided per vehicle.
- The need for a Passenger Assistant will be reviewed annually as part of the child's annual review.
- Passenger Assistants will not be provided where parents make their own travel arrangements.
- Where provided, the Council will make every effort to ensure the same Passenger Assistant is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to staff shortages, illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of resources.
- Parent/Carers are expected to bring their child to the vehicle and collect their child from the vehicle on the return journey. Passenger Assistants will not come to the door to collect a child.
- The Passenger Assistant should assist children on and off the vehicle and ensure they are seated safely while the vehicle is moving.
- Passenger Assistants must treat parents and children with respect and avoid confrontations.
- Passenger Assistants should deliver children to a member of school staff on arrival at the school so that at no time are children left unattended on the vehicle.
- If the Passenger Assistant has a concern for any child in their care, the head teacher and Croydon Transport Services will be informed.
- Passenger Assistants are not authorised to leave a child with anyone other than their parent/carer or named responsible adult (16+) identified in advance to Croydon Transport Services in writing by the parent/carer.
- All Passenger Assistants will have enhanced DBS clearance.
- Passenger Assistants must carry and display suitable identification at all times.
- Passenger Assistants must adhere to the Council's no smoking policy.
- Passenger Assistants have strict instructions not to enter into any personal arrangements with parents/carers, including changing pick up or drop off points without consulting the Council.

Drivers

- Drivers must carry and display suitable identification at all times.
- Drivers must have enhanced DBS clearance.
- Drivers must, as far as possible, be punctual.
- Drivers must ensure that all wheelchairs are secured correctly.
- Drivers must treat parents and children with respect and avoid confrontations.
- Drivers must report any poor behaviour of passengers to their supervisor and Croydon Transport Services.
- Drivers must ensure that all passenger harness and safety straps are properly adjusted and fitted securely before the journey commences.
- Drivers must adhere to the Council's no smoking policy.
- The driver is to stop, as close to the home address or collection point as traffic conditions will safely permit.
- The driver is not allowed to sound his horn to alert parents that they are there.
- Neither drivers nor Passenger Assistants are responsible for taking a child across the road if a parent/carer is waiting on the other side.
- Every effort will be made to ensure the same driver is used on a regular basis. This may not always be possible due to illness, holidays, retirement and staff resignations. Changes may also be necessary from time to time to ensure the efficient use of resources.

Safeguarding Children and Young People

- All children and young people must be handed over to a responsible adult at the drop off address within Croydon, provided by parent/carer. Drivers and Passenger Assistants are not permitted to leave children and young people with any person under the age of 16 or who is not an 'authorised' adult.
- Prior to starting transport, Croydon Transport Services will request details of any authorised adult and/or emergency contact details for any person who a child or young person can be handed over to in the event of an emergency.
- A child or young person should never be removed from a vehicle anywhere on a route other than at the normal setting down point for that journey. The exception to this would be long distance journeys making pre-agreed rest stops or in emergencies.

Health and Safety

- All wheelchairs and buggies must be crash tested and transportable.
- Transport contractors must carry out a Risk Assessment for the transport of passengers, which provides staff with information about the children/young people in their care. The majority of children/young people will be covered by a generic risk assessment for

transport however, in more complex cases, a specific Risk Assessment will be undertaken.

- Passenger Assistants are trained in basic First Aid and receive additional training specific to the child's needs where necessary. However, in the event of an emergency, Passenger Assistants and drivers will contact 999 emergency services.
- No transport staff is permitted to administer medication to any passenger.
- It is vital that parents/carers advise Croydon Transport Services of any health concerns that may affect their child whilst on transport. Information regarding allergies, for example, even if not thought to be directly relevant to transport. A form detailing these needs must be completed when vehicle transport is agreed. This should be updated whenever the needs change.
- Children and young people are not permitted to consume food or drinks whilst on board a vehicle. This standard will be enforced to ensure the continuing safety of all passengers whilst travelling.
- It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that arrangements are in place AM and PM to ensure the safe handover of their child to and from the care of the transport provider.
- In the case of extreme weather conditions, transport services will not operate. Decisions are taken on the day by 7.00am and parents will be alerted via a text message.
- In the case of extreme weather conditions, should a parent or carer choose to transport their child to school themselves, then it is their responsibility to ensure the return journey is fulfilled.

Journey times

- The Council will endeavour to ensure that pupils arrive at school fit to learn, and recognise that the length of the journey to school can affect this aim.
- Journey times may be longer where pupils are travelling to schools and colleges outside of Croydon
- On occasions there may be factors outside the Council's control e.g. unforeseen traffic congestion or bad weather that may affect journey times.
- In certain circumstances it may be necessary for the Council to vary planned routes and this may affect pick up and drop off times. Where this is the case the Council will endeavour to contact parents/carers in advance to advise them.
- Pick up and drop off times affect journey times and will therefore not be altered to fit parental circumstances (for example, a parent's work schedule)

Vehicle Waiting Times (Mornings)

- Parents/carers are expected to be available at home or at an agreed collection point, at an agreed time to meet transport in the morning.
To keep journey times down to an absolute minimum and ensure that all pupils arrive at school on time, all vehicles will adhere to strict waiting time limits as follows:
 - If a child is not ready, or not at the agreed collection point, the vehicle will wait for a maximum of 3 minutes after the agreed pick up time and then move off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.
 - If the vehicle arrives early for a pick up it will wait until the official set time and then a maximum of 3 minutes before moving off. If this means the child is unable to travel on the organised vehicle, the parent/carer is then responsible for ensuring that the child gets to school on time.

- If the vehicle is running late for a pick up, the crew are expected to advise parents/carers of the delay as soon as possible. When a vehicle arrives at a family home or collection point, the horn will **not** be sounded. Parents/carers are expected to have their child ready and waiting to board the vehicle and bring and collect their child to the vehicle.
- If a child/young person is not available for pick up within the time limits given above, for any reason, and no prior cancellation of the transport requirement has been received by the Council, this will be considered as a 'no show' and parents/carers will be advised accordingly. If 3 'no shows' are recorded during the Academic Year transport will be withdrawn and parents/carers will be responsible for the child/young person's attendance at school and any transport required.

Vehicle Waiting Times (Afternoons)

- Parents/carers must be available at home or the nominated delivery point, at the regular drop off time, every afternoon to meet and collect their child from the vehicle.
- Parents/carers must provide emergency contact details including an emergency address, located within the London Borough of Croydon, where their child can be dropped off.
- In the event that a parent/carer is unable to meet their child at the specified time and location, the emergency contact details will be used. If unsuccessful and in a final resort, a place of safety will be used. It will then be the parents/carers responsibility to collect from that place.
- At times, parents/carers may need to make emergency alternative arrangements for the handover of their child to a nominated responsible adult, either at the home address or at an alternative address within the London Borough of Croydon In these cases it is the parent/carer's responsibility to notify Croydon Transport Services and make suitable arrangements to ensure their child's safety.
- In circumstances where vehicles are delayed or late arriving the parent/carer should contact Croydon Transport Services. The team will take steps to directly address the situation with the provider.
- Where no responsible adult is available to meet a child from transport on more than two occurrences, travel assistance will be reviewed and may be suspended or permanently withdrawn. In these cases, the parents will receive no more than four letters (i) initially raising the concerns (ii) informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal (iii) final warning indicating that transport will be removed. The Passenger Transport team will issue the fourth and final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal. In these cases, parents become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.

Absences

- Where a child cannot attend school on any particular day due to illness it is the parents/carers responsibility to:
 - a) Contact Croydon Transport Services the day before travel is required, if it is known that the child will be off school the next day or;
 - b) Contact Croydon Transport Services as early as possible in the morning of the day their child is due to travel, if the child has only just begun to show signs of illness.
- When travel assistance is cancelled due to illness, with no specified timeframe, **it will only be reinstated** when the parent/carer notifies Croydon Transport Services.
- This advice should be given on **the day before** the child is due to return to school.
- Travel assistance will be reviewed, and may be suspended for a period of time or permanently withdrawn, if it becomes apparent that vehicles are not being cancelled with sufficient advance warning. Parents/carers will be responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in such circumstances.

Behaviour

- The London Borough of Croydon reserves the right to refuse to provide travel assistance where a child's/young person's behaviour is such that it is unacceptable. In these cases, the parents will receive no more than four letters (i) initially raising the concerns (ii) informal warning indicating the remedial steps taken and the potential of transport removal (iii) final warning indicating that transport will be removed. The Passenger Transport team will issue the fourth and final letter confirming the removal of transport, citing the reasons for the removal, the date of the proposed removal and the parental route of appeal. In these cases, parents become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.
- Where the Council or its contractors consider that a child's / young person's behaviour is so extreme as to constitute an immediate or on-going risk to the Health and Safety of her/himself, other service users, the vehicle crew, or members of the public, the Council reserves the right to suspend the provision of travel assistance immediately until or unless the issue can be resolved by parents/ carers, the child's/young person's school/college, or other appropriate professionals, to the Council's satisfaction that all reasonable adjustments have been made. If a child or young person is suspended from the provision of travel assistance in these circumstances, her/his parents can become responsible for their child's attendance at school and any transport required.
- Any wilful damage that incurs cost to the transport provider for either repair or cleaning remains the responsibility of the parent/carer of the child concerned. Continued or repeat behaviour that results in wilful damage can result in exclusion from Home to School Transport.

Extra journeys

- The provision of travel assistance extends only to journeys to and from school at the beginning and the end of the school day.
- Travel assistance is not provided on any other occasions, for example travel between schools, sports facilities, other curriculum activities and medical appointments.
- There are some instances where this limitation can be waived, for example, where a child has to attend an after school class as part of their education or related work experience / examinations at a different location other than school. This will be agreed on an individual basis and for a specified time period.
- In cases of exclusion, illness etc, if a child has to go home during the course of the school day the parent / carer is responsible for the provision of transport.
- Where a child attends more than one school, they may require additional transport. The school, which is the child's main school, will be responsible for arranging and meeting the cost of such transport.
- Where a child is based full time at a school, but visits other schools or a Pupil Referral Unit, the school where the pupil is 'on roll' will be responsible for arranging transport and for the cost of such transport. Parents/carers should, in these circumstances, address any issues directly to the child's school

Travel Assistance for Parents/Carers to Attend Meetings/Events

- Where a parent/carer is required to attend school for a meeting/event, it is their responsibility to make their own travel. However, subject to the following conditions, parents/carers may be allowed to travel on their child's vehicle:
 - (a) Permission is granted by Croydon Transport Services prior to the journey (**this is essential for insurance purposes**);

- (b) There is a spare seat available on the vehicle;
- (c) The vehicle is not diverting from its regular route.
- (d) There are no other children on the vehicle

Travel to Residential schools

- Children and young people normally attend residential schools on the following basis: weekly, termly and 52 weeks. Where a child attends weekly and meets the travel assistance criteria, assistance will be weekly to and from school. Where the placement is termly, assistance will be offered at the beginning of term, beginning of half term, end of half term and end of term. Where placement is for 52 weeks there will be a one off travel assistance to the placement until the young person leaves the placement permanently.
- Where a parent wishes their child to go to school or come home outside any of the above times it will be their responsibility to arrange travel between home and school.
- In general, on vehicle transport, children and young people will be picked up from their home address. However, in some circumstances transport will be from a central pick-up point. Children and young people are expected to travel to the pick-up point by public transport with an accompanying adult where possible; a travel warrant will be issued to cover the cost of the journey.
- The Council will consider all the available travel assistance options in relation to these placements including personal transport budgets and independent travel training.