

Together for Children



Post 16 Transport Policy Statement

Academic Year 2026/27

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1. STATEMENT

Together for Children encourages safe independent travel wherever possible. Walking and cycling promote healthy living, and the use of public transport is recommended in accordance with current initiatives and environmental issues.

Where the use of public transport is not suitable to student needs, alternative transport may be provided subject to various criteria outlined within this Policy.

2. KEY PARTNERS

- All Secondary Schools, Special Schools and Academies based within the administrative area of Sunderland City Council.
- Sunderland College.
- NEXUS (the administrative body of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority)
- Sunderland City Council
- Young people and their parents/carers

3. KEY PRINCIPLES

There is no duty on Local Authorities to provide free transport for young people who are not of compulsory school age. This is usually when a young person completes Year 11 at their school/academy.

Local Authorities must, however, publish an annual statement that sets out the travel arrangements considered necessary to assist Post 16 learners in full-time education.

Together for Children in Sunderland will provide travel assistance to eligible learners aged 16-25 years where it is deemed necessary and/or appropriate.

4. POST 16 TRAVEL ASSISTANCE

4.1 Introduction

This section of the Sunderland Post 16 Transport Policy is aimed at those learners who are able to travel independently or as accompanied to and from their chosen provision.

Post 16 students who live within Sunderland and would like to remain in full time education may be eligible for the schemes, and/or concessionary tickets contained within section 4 of this policy.

4.2 Network One Travel Tickets

NEXUS have, in conjunction with the local ticketing agency (Network Ticketing), arranged for the provision of discounted travel tickets for students aged 16-18 who are in full-time education. This ticket for students and young people is the only travel ticket that will let you travel throughout Tyne & Wear on virtually any bus, the Metro, Sunderland to Blaydon rail line and Shields ferry. It can be used all day, every day, from the start to the end of service. For up to date information, please view: <https://networkonetickets.co.uk/tickets/tickets-for-students-and-young-people/>

Bus operators also maintain their own products for students. These products are subject to change and for the most up to date information visit the following website: <http://www.nexus.org.uk/bus/tickets>

Metro also maintains its own dedicated product for students, one for those aged 16-18 and one for students aged over 18. For further information please visit: <http://www.nexus.org.uk/metro/tickets>

4.3 North East - Under 19 tickets

With a Stagecoach Under 19 ID card, you can buy discounted bus tickets for all Stagecoach buses in Tyne and Wear, Teesside and Hartlepool. Once you have your card you can present it to your driver each time you buy or use an Under 19 ticket on board.

For further details please follow the link below:

<https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/north-east/under-19#>

4.4 Arriva Student Information

Arriva offer subsidised, or in some instances free travel for students attending the following Colleges:

East Durham College – Peterlee and Houghall Campus
Bishop Auckland College
New College Durham

For further details please visit: <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/north-east>

4.5 Bursaries

Students attending Sunderland College, studying on a full-time programme, will be eligible to receive financial support towards travel as follows,

To qualify for support with travel, students aged 16-18 must meet one of the following criteria:

Household income less than £30,000: If you live more than 1 mile from your campus of study, you may receive support with a monthly allowance to pay for your travel.

Household income between £30,000 and £50,000: If you live more than 5 miles from your campus of study, you may receive support with a monthly allowance to pay for your travel. Eligible students will receive support via a monthly travel allowance based on the cheapest mode of transport.

<https://sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/experience/financial-support/>

Those in receipt of certain benefits, in their own right, may also be eligible for a £1,200 a year, Vulnerable Bursary.

For any other College or 6th Form provision please contact that particular establishment's student support service, or visit their website to discover more information on bursaries and eligibility.

4.6 Concessionary Bus Pass

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme is in place to provide free England-wide offpeak bus travel to eligible older and disabled people so they can access essential community facilities.

You are automatically eligible to apply for a travel pass if you are of fare paying age and you are in receipt of:

- Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (HRMCDLA)
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP), where the applicant has been awarded at least eight points against either the PIP Moving around and/or Communicating verbally activities
- War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement (WPMS).

You may also be eligible for a pass if you are/have:

- Blind or partially sighted
- Profoundly or severely deaf
- Without speech
- A disability or suffered an injury which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability to walk
- No arms or have long term loss of the use of both arms
- A learning disability which includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning
- Applied for the grant of a licence to drive a motor vehicle under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, and have had your application refused pursuant to section 92 of the Act (physical fitness), otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol.

To apply for a Concessionary Bus Pass please contact the Health and Wellbeing Team on (0191) 520 5552.

4.7 Companion Card

A Companion Card lets you take someone with you free of charge when you travel on buses in Tyne and Wear, County Durham, Northumberland and Darlington. It's available to residents of Tyne and Wear who receive certain allowances and need a companion to make all, or some journeys.

If you need a companion with you in order to be able to use buses, they will no longer need to pay, as long as they are travelling with you, and you have your Companion Card. If you have a Metro Gold Card, your Companion Card will also be valid on the Metro.

Please visit the website below for more details on the eligibility criteria and application process:

<https://nexus.org.uk/companion-card>

4.8 Taxi Card

The Taxi Card scheme can help people with mobility difficulties travel independently. It allows people to travel with a Nexus approved taxi company at a discounted price. Members will get issued with a card which is credited with a set amount of money every year – passengers use the money on their card to help pay towards each journey they make.

For further details on this scheme please visit the website below or contact Nexus directly on (0191) 202 0747: <https://www.nexus.org.uk/ticket-information/concessions/taxicard>

5. BLUE BADGE SCHEME

Sunderland City Council's Blue Badge Scheme helps people with disabilities access essential community facilities. The cost of a Blue Badge is £10.00. To apply by telephone please call: (0191) 520 5552.

Details of the Blue Badge eligibility criteria can be found at:

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/blue-badge>

6. CARE TO LEARN

The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs while you study. However, you must be aged under 20 at the start of your course.

The scheme is available for publicly funded courses in England. This includes courses in:

- schools
- sixth forms in schools
- sixth-form colleges

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

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

For further information on the Care to Learn scheme please visit the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

7. ACCESS TO WORK

If you are disabled or have a physical or mental health condition that makes it hard for you to do your job, your employer must make certain changes, known as 'reasonable adjustments' to make sure you are not substantially disadvantaged when doing your job.

If the help you need at work is not covered by your employer, you may be able to get help from Access to Work. You need to have a paid job or be about to start or return to one.

You'll be offered support based on your needs, which may include a grant to help cover the costs of practical support in the workplace.

An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings
- help getting to and from work

For further information on the Access to Work scheme please visit GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

8. LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND)

8.1 Introduction

Dedicated transport may be provided for Post 16 learners who meet the eligibility criteria below and complete the application form (link to form in section 8.2). The Home to School Transport Team will work closely with SEN Caseworkers when reviewing any transport requests.

To qualify for assistance with dedicated transport the young person must:

- be aged 16-25 during the academic year
- be undertaking a full-time course of study (12 guided learning hours or more per week) for a minimum period of one academic year
- have an Education Health and Care Plan or medical condition which affects mobility live over 3 miles walking distance from the provision.

Learners who have a medical condition that precludes the use of public transport, may be provided with transport to and from their course of study. A supporting letter from the young person's consultant must be provided with the application form.

Students are expected to have made signs of progression in their chosen course if they are applying for additional years of assistance with travel. It would be usual practice to offer assistance with travel, where eligible, to students for two years of Further Education following their final year at school. This premise would apply to those young people who remain at Special Schools until the age of 19 years and then move on to College.

8.2 Application Form

All Post 16 Learners who may require dedicated transport due to their SEN and/or medical condition must complete the assistance with travel application form, as soon as the student's placement has been confirmed. Late applications may result in transport not being arranged in time for the student to access the start of their study programme.

All transport provision will be reviewed annually, unless otherwise stated, therefore a new application form is required to be submitted each year. Transport can be offered temporarily in some instances, while an assessment is carried out by an Independent Travel Trainer.

The application form must be completed and submitted online,

<https://www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/travel-assistance>

8.3 Provision of dedicated transport

It should be noted that to protect the public funds we administer, it may be necessary to schedule journeys that are not direct to a home address or, an educational establishment. From September 2025, Together for Children will introduce set times for transport to get students to colleges and then be collected from colleges. This procedure will be in place for the mainstream colleges (i.e. Sunderland College, Gateshead College, South Tyneside College, New College Durham, East Durham College). Together for Children have worked with the colleges to set times that most students use on their journeys on a morning and afternoon.

Transport provision to Post 16 establishments will not have a passenger assistant present, unless one has been specifically requested. Where a passenger assistant is provided, they should be able to prove their identity with an Education Permit, issued by Together for Children indicating they have undertaken a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) assessment. All drivers and escorts must also undergo a Safeguarding training course.

All journey times will be limited to a maximum of 75 minutes each way in line with best practice. The only exception to this would be where transport is provided direct to the educational establishment, and this was factored into the placement of the young person.

8.4 Financial Contribution

After a consultation process in 2016, Sunderland City Council introduced a Post 16 travel contribution for the provision of dedicated transport where eligibility has been met. The travel contribution is £651 per academic year and can be paid either in one full amount or in monthly instalments through a Standing Order arrangement. The amount identified was equivalent to an All Zone over-16 Travel Permit supplied by Nexus. Together for Children will continue to organise taxi provision where eligibility has been met and, in all cases, will still subsidise a large proportion of the cost.

Exemptions to the contribution include:

- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Low income families (Highest Working Tax Credits or Free School Meals)
- Young people assessed in their own right who are already making payments to Adult Social Care via a Personal Budget

8.5 Preference of Provision

Where a student, parent or carer has chosen a placement that is out of the Sunderland boundary, Together for Children may not provide transport if a local provider can offer the same course.

8.6 Course Eligibility

Learners must be enrolled on a full-time course of study (12 guided learning hours or more per week) for a minimum period of one academic year. Only Further Education (FE) courses/study will be funded for assistance with travel.

Students entering Higher Educational courses such as degree level studies would not be eligible for assistance with transport under this policy.

8.7 Work Based Learning, Work Experience and Apprenticeships

Together for Children do not provide dedicated taxi provision for students undertaking Work Based Learning Programmes or Apprenticeships (i.e. Supported Internships). Transport is also not provided for students to and from work experience placements, even if this is part of their course.

8.8 Transport to different sites and locations

Together for Children will not fund transport to different sites within a College provision, or to different locations other than the main campus, usually identified within a learners Education Health and Care Plan.

If learners are required to move between sites during the day, any transport requirements would not be funded by Together for Children. Any such arrangements should be requested through the educational establishment attended. Only two journeys per day will be funded by Together for Children during the academic year.

9. INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING (ITT)

Together for Children promotes independent travel where possible, to help enable young people with additional needs an opportunity to learn an important life skill. The training, once completed, can be used by the young person to travel safely on public transport to their Post 16 establishment or training provider.

Independent Travel helps young people:

- improve confidence
- develop social skills
- improve communication
- improve good health and wellbeing
- increase access to education, employment and training
- increase social and leisure activities

Independent Travel is now included in outcomes for some young people within their Education Health and Care Plan. In these instances, the education or training providers are directly funded to carry out travel training with the young person as part of their programme of study in order to achieve their outcomes.

Together for Children also fund a Travel Training Programme with staff based at Barbara Priestman Academy. The current programme has developed into a very successful model over several years, helping many students to travel independently.

Please visit the website below to watch a short video relating to Independent Travel Training:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_CUNSRQjw

For further information on Independent Travel Training please contact Home to School/College Transport on (0191) 561 2284.

10. SCHOOL TRANSPORT MILEAGE RATE (STMR)

The School Transport Mileage Rate (STMR) is a payment of 45p per mile for two journeys per day made to parents/carers of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) who are eligible for travel assistance.

The benefits of the STMR:

- Parents/carers can choose the most appropriate travel arrangements for their child that best fit with their personal circumstances
- Parents/carers control how funding is used to get their child to and from school/college on time in a way that suits them and their child
- Parents/carers can look at opportunities to share with other parents and potentially increase buying power
- Reduces the requirement on the Council to procure external taxi providers

If you would like more information The School Transport Mileage Rate, please contact Home to School/College Transport on (0191) 561 2284.

11. APPEALS PROCESS

If a young person or their parent is not satisfied with a decision made by the Transport Lead, they should submit an appeal. This must be in writing within 20 working days of the original decision.

An appeal can only be submitted on the basis of:

- Entitlement
- Distance measurement
- Route Safety
- Consideration of exceptional circumstances

The appeal will then follow the process outlined below:

Stage 1 – Strategic SEND Lead, reviews the Transport Lead’s decision and sends the young person or their parent a written notification of the outcome including:

- Detailed reasoning for decision made including route assessment
- Notification of option to escalate to Stage 2

This will be completed within 20 working days of the appeal being received.

Stage 2 – If the young person or their parent are still not satisfied with the Stage 1 response, they are entitled to again challenge the Strategic SEND Lead’s decision. This must also be carried out in writing within 20 working days of the Stage 1 response.

An Independent Panel consisting of the Director of Education and a representative from the Complaints Team is assembled. The Transport Lead presents background facts of the case. The

Independent Panel also reviews the written representation from the young person or their parent. This will be completed within 40 working days:

- SEND Manager will be present if the child in question has Special Educational Needs
- Minutes from the Panel Meetings will be compiled for evidence purposes

The Independent Panel sends a decision letter within 5 working days, including how to escalate to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

12. COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Compliments regarding any provisions made in this document or any services provided should be directed to The Director of Educational Services, Together for Children, Bunny Hill Centre, Hylton Lane, Sunderland, SR5 4BW.

Any complaint regarding the service provided by officers of Sunderland City Council and/or Together for Children should be in writing to: The Complaints & Feedback Manager, Together for Children, Bunny Hill Centre, Hylton Lane, Sunderland, SR5 4BW. As much information as possible should be included (names and dates where possible).

Complaints with regard functions performed by NEXUS, schools, transport providers or any college should, in the first instance be referred to that particular organisation.

13. USEFUL CONTACTS

Home to School/College Transport	0191 561 2284	www.togetherforchildren.org.uk/families/school-transport
NEXUS	0191 202 0747	www.nexus.org.uk
Arriva	n/a	www.arrivabus.co.uk/north-east/
Go North East	0191 420 5050	www.gonortheast.co.uk/
Stagecoach	0191 566 0231	www.stagecoachbus.com/
Metro	0191 203 3199	www.nexus.org.uk/metro
Sunderland College	0191 511 6000	www.sunderlandcollege.ac.uk/
South Tyneside College	0191 427 3900	www.stc.ac.uk/
Gateshead College	0191 440 1477	www.gateshead.ac.uk/
East Durham College	0191 375 4700	www.eastdurham.ac.uk/
Newcastle College	0191 200 4000	www.ncl-coll.ac.uk/
New College Durham	0191 375 4000	www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk/
Tyne Met College	0191 229 5000	www.tynemet.ac.uk/