

Isle of Wight Council
**POST 16 TRANSPORT
POLICY STATEMENT
2026/27 ACADEMIC YEAR**

1 Document Information

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3 Introduction

Students are now required to be in education, employment or training until their 18th birthday, which could involve staying in full-time education in school/college, starting an apprenticeship or traineeship, or spending 20 hours or more a week working or volunteering while in part-time education or training. There has not, however, been any change to statutory school age which ends at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 16.

Local authorities do not have a general duty to provide free or subsidised Post 16 travel support but may decide to do so. The local authority has a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training (the 'sixth form age duty').

'Sixth form age' refers to those young people who are over 16 years of age but under 19 or continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday (years 12,13,14).

Local authorities also have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to participate in education and training, up to the age of 25.

This policy uses the term 'Post 16' to include both learners of sixth form age and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities up to the age of 25.

This policy document specifies the support that Isle of Wight Council (the council) considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post 16 learners receiving education or training. The local authority recognises that families may need a transport service to ensure that Post 16 students special educational needs and disabled students can access a place that is suitable for their needs and so do offer, under discretionary powers, a transport service that requires an annual parental contribution.

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

All young people carrying on their education Post 16 must reapply for travel support (Refer to section 9 of this policy statement).

4 Transport and Travel Support

4.1 Bus discounts from Southern Vectis

Southern Vectis offer a range of discounts available for students up to the age of 19. Students aged 19+ can also benefit from 25% discount of fares providing they hold a valid NUS card.

For further information please visit www.islandbuses.info

Students who hold an English National Concessionary Bus Pass issued by the Isle of Wight Council, eligible on the basis of disability, may travel free at peak times, 7 days a week on any network bus.

For further details on how to apply for an English National Disabled Bus Pass please visit <https://www.iow.gov.uk/transport-and-parking/transport/public-transport/concessionary-travel-on-the-isle-of-wight/>

4.2 Train services

Island Line railway operates between Ryde Pier Head and Shanklin, serving Smallbrook Junction, Brading, Sandown and Lake stations along the way operated by South Western Railway.

South Western Railway provide a selection of discounted fares by purchasing the following railcards, which are also valid outside of term time:

- 16-17 Saver Railcard (you can get up to 50% off certain fares and season tickets)
- 16 – 25 Railcard (you can get up to 1/3 off selected fares)

Disabled Persons Railcard (you can get up to 1/3 off selected fares, plus 1/3 off for a companion when travelling together).

For further information on the application process for the above railcards please visit www.southwesternrailway.com

4.3 Wightlink Ferry Service (*Operating between Fishbourne and Ryde to Portsmouth, and Yarmouth to Lymington*)

Students aged between 16 - 18 years can purchase a season ticket for travel to and from the mainland for just over half the normal adult price.

For further information please visit the Wightlink website as detailed below www.wightlink.co.uk

4.4 Red Funnel Ferry (Operating between East Cowes and West Cowes to Southampton)

Red Funnel season tickets allow students who aged 16 - 18 years and in full time education at a mainland college to travel on a reduced ticket rate.

To apply for a season ticket or find out further information on please visit www.redfunnel.co.uk

4.5 Hovertravel Ferry Service (Operating between Ryde and Southsea)

Hovertravel offer an Academic Flyer ticket for students in full time education travelling across the Solent on a daily basis.

For further information please see the Hovertravel website as detailed below.
<http://www.hovertravel.co.uk>

5 Travel Support from Schools and Colleges

In addition to the support available from the Council, Post 16 providers may also provide financial support towards transport costs for certain students such as young parents, those from low income families, those at risk of being Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). This is determined by the provider and is often based on how they have locally determined to use 'hardship' funds.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help young people overcome specific barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

5.1 Vulnerable Bursary

A vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups below:

- In care
- Care leavers
- in receipt of Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right
- in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living or Personal Independence Payments in their own right
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

5.2 Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.

To be eligible for the discretionary bursary young people must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- be studying a programme that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality (such as Ofsted), the provision must also be funded by either a Government funding agency or the local authority.

Schools and college are responsible for managing both types of bursary. Young people who want to apply for support from the bursary fund should contact their chosen school or college to make an application.

Further information can be found at www.gov.uk by searching for Post 16 bursaries.

5.3 Young Parents / Care to Learn

If you are a young parent under 20, Care to Learn can help pay for your childcare and related travel costs, up to £180 per child per week, while you're learning.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

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

For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/how-to-claim>

6 Local Authority (LA) Support

6.1 LA support for young people without special educational needs or disabilities.

The Council provides no free or subsidised transport Post 16 mainstream students in further education.

6.2 LA support for learners with special educational needs or a disability.

The local authority will provide travel assistance for Post 16 (age 16 – 25) students with special educational needs or disability. To deliver this service in the financial year 2025/26 it is expected to cost the LA in excess of £700,000. A parental contribution towards the cost of this transport will be required which will increase by Consumer Price Index (CPI) each academic year. The charging schedule is detailed below:

Annual charge	Termly charge
£602.50	£200.84

Transport will normally only be offered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or if the student has a disability which means they require transport arrangements to be provided but will not automatically be offered to those students. The student or their parent/s will need to apply for transport and provide evidence to support the request. The evidence must demonstrate that it is necessary for the local authority to provide transport to facilitate attendance, and evidence that without transport assistance, the student will be unable to attend the educational placement. When assessing an application for transport assistance, the local authority will refer to the criteria set out in Appendix 1.

6.3 Students who have been assessed and are eligible for travel assistance will be allocated transport or travel assistance appropriate to their assessed needs. In some cases, families may be offered the option of a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) which allows families to arrange transport for the student themselves. The local authority will take into consideration any cost to the council which exceeds the cost of arranging the transport and will make a best value assessment based on the specific need of the student.

6.4 Some students with complex and/or severe needs are placed in a mainland residential special school or college because there is no appropriate provision available locally. Such students will receive transport at the start and end of each term, half term and at other school/college closures. Any additional transport will be the responsibility of

parents/carers. Transport will be subject to the parental contribution charge as detailed in paragraph 6.2

- 6.5** Transport is not offered to or from points other than the students registered school or college and the home address.
- 6.6** The expectation is that students will share transport and the drop off and collection arrangements are made in line with the school/college start and finish times. Transport is not able to take into consideration individual student's timetables and where appropriate, the transport arrangement may include a waiting time at the start and/or end of the day.
- 6.7** Independent Travel Training may be offered to eligible students with parent's consent. Readiness to complete Independent Travel Training would be outlined in the EHCP or agreed by the local authority following a discussion with the school or college and parents. Once an eligible student has successfully completed Independent Travel Training, their travel arrangements will be reviewed
- 6.8** The home address will be that at which the student resides and spends the majority of their time. Occasionally a student will have more than one address, for example, because they live with parents who have different addresses. In this situation, the home address used for determining transport will be the one at which the student spends most of their time including weekends and school holidays as well as during the week. Where the student spends equal time at two addresses, parents must nominate one address as the home address for transport even if both addresses are eligible for transport assistance. Parents must let the local authority know if the student's home address changes and will be asked to provide evidence of this if it affects entitlement to transport assistance. When the student lives at the other address, they will not qualify for any transport arrangements other than the one provided from the home address.
- 6.9** The local authority may provide assistance with transport to education providers based on the mainland however students would still need to meet the criteria as detailed in Appendix 1.
- 6.10** The same criteria as set out in Appendix 1 apply for students attending post 16 training providers. Students in apprenticeships with employed status do not qualify for any assistance with travel costs.
- 6.11** Students who apply and are granted local authority transport assistance are expected to comply with the [School Transport Code of Good Practice](#).

7 Reimbursement of the Charges

If travel assistance is no longer required part way through a term, a partial reimbursement of the charge may apply, provided that all tickets/passes have been returned and are received within the timescales stated in the table below. When calculating a reimbursement for tickets/passes received after the first day of a term an administrative charge of £60 will apply. The following levels of refund will be payable after the administration charge has been taken:

Length of time ticket/pass has been used	Refund due
Up to 4 weeks	75%
4 to 8 weeks	50%
Over 8 weeks	0%

No reimbursement will be paid during the summer term.

If a student has specialised arrangements i.e a taxi arrangement, we will be unable to offer a reimbursement of costs at any point during the academic year.

8 Local Authority Support in Other Circumstances

If a young person (16-19 years old) is not in education, employment or training (NEET), they may be entitled to financial support with travel costs associated with efforts to engage in education, employment or training. Such assistance is made available through travel tokens issued in advance of their travel. These tokens can be used for travel from their home address to the Isle of Wight Council's Island Futures Team or to a Post 16 provider. Travel tokens are available through the Island Futures Team who can be contacted via email at island.futures@iow.gov.uk or by calling them on 01983 823888¹.

¹ The discretionary offer is subject to local funding which is determined by 31 March each year.

9 Applying for Local Authority Transport Support

Applications for transport assistance should be completed once a place has been secured at a Post 16 education provider. Students are required to complete a new application each academic year and will be assessed on the policy which relates to the academic year the student is applying for.

Each academic year we aim to set a deadline for transport applications to ensure that we have time to process applications ahead of the start of the academic year. We're not always able to guarantee that transport assistance will be in place for the start of the academic year if applications are received after this date. Further information and frequently asked questions can be viewed on our webpage at www.iow.gov.uk/schooltransport.

Parents should complete the transport application form online named '[Apply for a child or Young Person with an EHCP](#)'. Once received by the team you will receive an additional supplementary form to complete. Both forms will need to be completed before your application can be considered. In addition, applicants applying for transport assistance will need to provide evidence to support the request. The evidence must demonstrate that it is necessary for the local authority to provide transport to facilitate attendance, and evidence that without transport assistance, the student will be unable to attend the educational placement.

If you are applying for transport assistance under the low income criteria, it is important that you provide the additional evidence that confirms eligibility to one of the qualifying benefits.

If you need help understanding this policy or further support to apply for travel assistance, contact the SEND team either via phone on 01983 823470 or email at EHCP.general@iow.gov.uk.

10 Appendix 1 – Criteria applied to determine eligibility for Transport Assistance

10.1 The following criteria applies to all students:

The local authority will provide travel assistance for full-time Post 16 (age 16 – 25) students with special educational needs or disability, providing they meet the following criteria:

- The student has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) with a named school/s or educational setting/s
- The education establishment is considered to be the nearest suitable placement from their home address which offers a course or programme which is able to meet the special educational needs of the student concerned.
- The education establishment is over three miles from their home address, measured by the nearest available walking route

In some cases, transport may be provided even if the educational establishment is located within walking distance as set out above if it is deemed necessary, to facilitate the student's attendance. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may take into account, among other factors, the following:

- The student's ability to walk
- The student's need to be accompanied by an adult

10.2 The following criteria applies additionally to student's aged 16 or 17 in September 2026:

The local authority expects that parents and carers take responsibility for facilitating their child's attendance in education where they are able to do so.

Families/applications may apply for transport and explain their circumstances which makes support from the local authority with transport necessary to enable their child to attend their place of education or training. All requests for transport will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If deemed eligible to transport assistance, a parental contribution towards transport as set out in paragraph 6.2 will normally apply.

When a student's parent/s are in receipt of the following benefits the parental contribution charge will be waived.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190).

- Working Tax Credit run-on-paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400).

Families with a low income but not in receipt of the above benefits, there the imposition of the charge would reduce their income to around £16,190; or those with exceptional circumstances, may apply for a discretionary waiver or reduction in charge.

10.3 The following applies additionally to students who are:

- aged 18 when the transport starts in September 2026 or
- already 18 at the time of application or 19 or
- over and continuing on a course that they started before their 19th birthday

There will be no expectation that a parent will assist with their adult child's transport arrangement, although parents who wish to do will be welcome to support their adult child's transport arrangement.

If deemed eligible to transport assistance, a parental contribution towards transport as set out in paragraph 6.2 will normally apply.

When a student's parent/s are in receipt of the following benefits the parental contribution charge will be waived.

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on-paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400)

Families with a low income but not in receipt of the above benefits, there the imposition of the charge would reduce their income to around £16,190; or those with exceptional circumstances, may apply for a discretionary waiver or reduction in charge.

10.4 The following applies to students aged 19 – 25 and starting a new course:

If deemed eligible to transport assistance under the criteria set out in section 1 and the student requires specialist provision to be arranged by the local authority due to their disability, no contribution towards the cost of transport will be required.

If deemed eligible to transport assistance under the criteria set out in section 1 and the student does not require specialist provision, a contribution towards transport as set out in paragraph 6.2 will apply.

11 Appendix 2 – Review/Appeals Process

Parents who wish to challenge a decision about:

- The suitability of the transport arrangements offered to their child;
- their child's eligibility;
- the distance measurement in relation to statutory walking distances; and
- the inherent safety of the route in accordance with the Road Safety GB guidelines
- other exceptional circumstances

may do so via email to EHCP.general@iow.gov.uk or in writing to, Special Educational Needs Team, County Hall, High Street, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 1UD. Parents should indicate their reasons for challenging the decision using the categories above.

In the first instance a case will be reviewed by a Senior Officer within the School Transport Service.

In cases against refusal of a transport service there may be a further appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel made up of one or more Senior Officers outside of the School Transport Service. Members of the Panel will have an understanding of the school transport Policy and legislative framework and will make decisions on appeals against offers of transport.

11.1 Stage one: Review by a Senior Officer

A parent/carer has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's school transport decision to make a written request asking for a review of the decision.

The written request should detail why the parent believes the decision should be reviewed using the categories above. They should give details of any personal and/or family circumstances the parent believes should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

Within 20 working days of receipt of the parent's written request a senior officer will review the original decision and send the parent a detailed written notification of the outcome of their review, setting out:

- whether they have upheld the local authority's original decision;
- why they reached that decision;
- how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
- the factors considered in reaching their decision;
- any other agencies or directorates that were consulted as part of the review.

Where they have upheld the original decision, they should also explain how the parent may escalate their appeal to stage two of the process.

11.2 Stage two: Review by an independent appeal panel, where it applies.

A parent has 20 working days from receipt of the local authority's stage one written decision notification to make a written request to escalate the matter to stage two.

Within 40 working days of receipt of the parents request an independent appeal panel will consider written and verbal representations from both the parent and officers involved in the case and give a detailed written notification of the outcome (within 5 working days), setting out:

- whether they have upheld the local authority's original decision;
- why they reached that decision;
- how the review was conducted (including the standard followed e.g. Road Safety GB);
- the factors considered in reaching their decision;
- information about any other directorates and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the review; and
- information about the parent's right to put the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (see below).

The independent appeal panel will be made up of one or more members who will be independent of the original decision making process (but are not required to be independent of the local authority) and suitably experienced (at the discretion of the local authority), to ensure a balance is achieved between meeting the needs of the parents and the local authority, and that road safety requirements are complied with and no child is placed at unnecessary risk. Members will be assigned by Democratic Services.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman There is a right of complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, but only if complainants consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal has been handled. If the complainant considers the decision of the independent panel to be flawed on public law grounds, the complainant may also apply for judicial review