



Policy and guidance notes

Tower Hamlets Council can provide travel assistance for eligible children and young people who live in Tower Hamlets and are attending schools and sixth form/colleges.

If you live outside of Tower Hamlets even if you are in temporary accommodation you should contact your home council for travel assistance.

Transport for London (TfL) offers free and/or discounted travel for children under the age of 18 in full-time education, which includes:

- 5-10 year-olds can travel free on all TfL and most National Rail services in London
- 11-15 year-olds can travel free on buses and trams and travel at half adult rate on all other TfL services and most National Rail services in London
- 16 and 17 year-olds in full-time education or on a work-based learning scheme eligible can travel free on buses and trams and travel at half adult rate on all TfL services and most National Rail services in London.

Please visit tfl.gov.uk/fares or call the Oyster helpline on 0343 222 1234 for further information and advice on how to apply for a Zip card.

If you require support outside the scope of free travel arrangements and any other alternatives, you can make an application for travel assistance.

Please note that you will only be eligible for assistance if you are:

- **registered at the 'qualifying school' (see section 'Qualifying school' for further information) and**
- **attending the nearest 'suitable' school'. This is the 'nearest qualifying school' with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs that the child may have.**

Children or young people with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP)

If the child or young person has an Education, Health or Care Plan (EHCP), applications should be made directly to the SEN travel team:

Tel: 020 7364 4880

Email: SpecialEducationalNeeds@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Website: www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/pages/local-offer/send/travel-assistance

Travel assistance claims will not be backdated. Please check whether you are eligible by reading the following guidance and the Council's policy.

From September 2025 you should also be able to apply online for travel assistance.

Please send your completed form and any supporting documentation to:

School Admissions Service

Tower Hamlets Council
Tower Hamlets Town Hall
160 Whitechapel Road
London
E1 1BJ

Tel: 020 7364 5006

Email: cme@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Website: towerhamlets.gov.uk/schooladmissions

Full details of the Children's Travel Assistance Policy, the application form and guidance notes are all available on our website (see above).

Completing the form for travel assistance

Section A must be completed for all applicants. You should then complete either Section B or C as follows:

- Section B should be completed for children in primary or secondary school.
- Section C should be completed by/for students who are attending sixth form/college.

The declaration in Part 9 must be signed and dated by the parent/carer and/or the student (if over 16).

Travel assistance for children in primary or secondary school

This policy is based on the legal duty on Local Authorities '...to make such suitable free travel arrangements as it is considered necessary to facilitate attendance at school for eligible children.' (Section 508B of the Education Act 1996, amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) .

Who is eligible?

The council can provide assistance for eligible children of compulsory school age who meet the following criteria:

1. Statutory walking distance

Children who are attending a school that is beyond two miles for a pupil under the age of 8 or three miles for children aged 8 or over.

2. Special educational needs, disability or mobility problem

Children who cannot be reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs (SEN) or disability, including temporary medical conditions.

3. Unsafe route

Children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school in safety because of the nature of the route

4. Extended rights eligibility

Children entitled to Free School Meals, or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit and:

- the school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11)
- the school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 and there are no suitable nearer schools)
- the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).

We will also consider whether there are any medical reasons affecting the parent/carer's ability to accompany the child to and from school along a walking route which can be considered safe.

The council's duty to provide home to school travel arrangements applies to travel between home and the relevant educational establishment for a child.

Qualifying school

The relevant educational establishment for a child will be:

- The 'qualifying school' or alternative educational establishment at which the child is registered and receiving education.
- 'Qualifying schools' are community, foundation or voluntary schools; Community or foundation special schools; Non-maintained special schools; Pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools (attached to a mainstream school); If a child has an EHC plan, an independent school can also be a 'qualifying school' if it named in the child's statement.

- Travel assistance will normally only be considered if we are unable to offer your child a place at a suitable local school. We expect families to have applied for a place at their local school before applying for assistance and request this information on the application form. If there are reasons why a school transfer would not be suitable for the child, please provide a covering letter with supporting information.

Travel assistance for students attending sixth form/college

The council also has a duty to make arrangements for the provision of transport or otherwise to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training, called the 16-18 Transport Duty (Section 509AA of the 1996 Education Act)

Who is eligible?

The council is responsible for ensuring that learners of sixth form age are able to access and attend the education and training of their choice. This includes providing assistance with travel.

Young people can apply for travel assistance if they:

- are a resident of Tower Hamlets
- are aged 16 to 18 or a 'continuing learner' who started their course before their 19th birthday
- are attending a full-time course in a maintained school sixth form/college or other establishment. Assistance is not provided to students attending private (independent) fee paying establishments.
- are attending the nearest maintained establishment at which the course, or the majority of the course is offered (i.e. at least 50% of the course). If the young person is attending a specialist course, this must be one that ends with a nationally-recognised vocational qualification such as BTEC or NVQ.
- the establishment is over three miles from the young person's home address.
- their parents' taxable income was £18,210 or less in the last financial year*.

* This figure is based on the Department for Work & Pension's (DWP) definition of low pay ('any family earning less than 60% of the national median pay') and may therefore change depending on the national median pay at the time of application.

Supporting Documents

All applicants must provide proof of address, eg a recent Council Tax bill.

If you have any medical/social reason you would like to be considered with your application then please provide evidence with this application that is supported by a professional (such as a doctor's report).

Reason	Explanation	Documentation required
Medical	Physical or mental health issues relating to the child/young person or any other immediate member of the family e.g. disability	Report from a hospital specialist or other professional
Social	Issues affecting the family such as domestic violence, involvement from social services, or if there are other children attending a different school and you are a single parent	Letter from a social worker or other professional, copy of Council Tax bill or tenancy agreement, birth certificate(s) or copy of award letter showing details of child/ren mentioned on application.
Employment	One or both parents/carer are working or seeking work and must be available for training or interviews etc	Letter from employer confirming the nature of employment and days and hours worked, letter from Jobcentre Plus confirming training etc
Income	Currently in receipt of benefits such as income support or Job Seekers Allowance, entitled to Free School Meals	Recent tax credits award notice or JSA letter
Housing	Currently living in temporary accommodation, arranged by Tower Hamlets either in or outside the borough.	Copy of tenancy agreement, a confirmation letter from the Lettings Team

Please also provide the correct proof of parental income as required.

Parental income

When completing Section C please provide the correct documentation as below:

Source of income	Documentation required
Employment	Copy of P60/P60U for the last financial year, or payslips for the last three months. If self employed then copy of annual self assessment tax return.
DWP Benefits (Department for Work and Pensions) such as Job Seekers Allowance and low income benefits, Carers and disability benefits and/or Tax Credits and Universal Credit	Copy of the front page of award letter from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), dated within the last 12 months and clearly showing name and address and entitlement. A photo or scanned copy is sufficient.
Income from Company and Private Pension	Copy of P60/P60U ending in the last financial year

Further information is available on the support available for students in further education, please see our Transport Policy statement at

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/advice_and_benefits/grants/school_travel_support.aspx

Please note that failure to provide the necessary documents may delay the assessment of your application.

Processing your application

Children will usually only be eligible for travel assistance if the council cannot offer a place at a suitable alternative school. Therefore please ensure that you have made an application to three of your local schools before submitting an application.

You will receive an acknowledgment letter or email once we have received your application.

It can take up to 30 days to complete the processing of your application, and we may request further information which is required to make a decision, such as:

- does the child have a freedom pass?
- does the child receive the Disability Living Allowance Mobility Component (high/low)?
- the nature and complexity of any disability or illness relating to the parent or child and how this affects their ability to travel to school independently or via public transport.
- route checks, risk assessments and independent travel training assessments.

If your application for travel assistance is successful, the council will decide on the most suitable provision, taking into account the child's specific needs, the statutory criteria and the most effective use of the council's resources.

The range of options include:

- **travel pass:** for the parent or child
- **parental reimbursement:** reimbursement to parents for using own vehicle to transport their child to and from school.
- **transport vehicles:** in exceptional circumstances the council may provide a vehicle to transport a child to and from school, such as a bus.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of your application. If your application for travel assistance is refused, or you are unhappy with the type of assistance offered, then you will have a right of appeal against the decision and you will be advised of this in the decision letter.

Appeals under the LA's travel assistance policy are administered in two stages. Further details of the appeals process are available on the appeal form.

Any changes

Please contact us immediately if there are any changes to your circumstances which may affect your entitlement. If you fail to do so, this may result in the assistance being withdrawn and you incurring costs.

Review

A child or young person's eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed annually or sooner, if there is a change in circumstances. The parent, carer or young person may be required to provide information for the review.

Travel assistance may be reviewed or removed in the following circumstances:

- failure to provide information which is requested
- when there is any significant change in circumstances, such as a change in home address or a change in the child's needs
- on the written request of the parent who, if necessary, has made alternative arrangements for their child's travel to school
- change in the policy or statutory legislation
- assistance obtained via a fraudulent application.

Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next school term, or sooner by mutual agreement.