

Home to School Travel and Transport Personal Travel Allowance Policy

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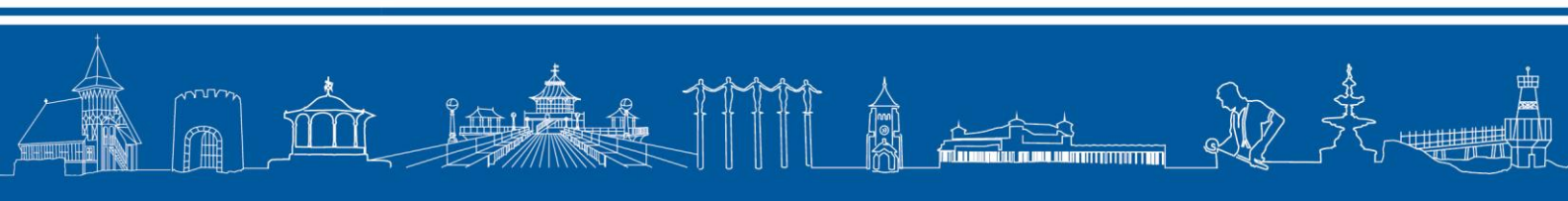
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Last updated by Georgina on 20 February 2024



1. Introduction

This is a supplementary policy to enhance the information available in the statutory policies available on the [North Somerset Council Website](#). The personal travel allowance is only offered to those students eligible for Home to School Travel.

You cannot receive a Personal Travel Allowance if your child is not eligible for free home to school travel assistance.

2. What is a Personal Travel Allowance?

A Personal Travel Allowance (PTA) is a sum of money paid to parent or carers of children and young people who qualify for school travel assistance. This is offered as an alternative to a contracted service and is at the council's discretion.

The travel allowance will be agreed for the current academic year (September – July) with a review each summer prior to the following academic year.

A PTA gives flexibility to families that would like the freedom to choose how their child travels to school. It can be used for the following examples (list not exhaustive):

- Fund car sharing opportunities identified by schools and the local community.
- Purchasing travel passes for public transport services.
- Adapting or own vehicle.
- To pay for fuel/running costs on a vehicle that is used to provide school transport.
- Covering the cost of another person (carer/ friend/ family member) to provide transport.
- Covering the cost of childcare for other students to allow the parent/carer to take the eligible student to their educational setting.

PTAs are tailored to meet the specific needs of each family, considering their unique circumstances. It is designed to ensure that any transport costs are covered without any cost to yourself, guaranteeing access your child's educational setting is free.

Please note the PTA does not take in to consideration the parents/ carers time.

3. PTA Benefits

If a parent selects a PTA as a transport option for their child, some potential advantages may include:

- Your child is more relaxed due to your child being with someone familiar.

- Little time constraints. Reducing stress and alleviating pressure.
- Maintaining day to day contact with school and care givers/ teachers.

PTA's provide parents and carers with the opportunity to select transport options that best meet their child's needs. By allowing families to have control over how allocated funds are spent, PTAs aim to create a more manageable and predictable school commute for both parents and children, ultimately reducing stress and anxiety. In addition, this flexibility enables children to access a wider range of services, such as after-school clubs and activities.

4. Conditions of use

Personal Travel Allowances cannot be used in the following circumstances:

- To access or utilise space on transport services already offered through Home to School Transport (for example the Vacant Seat Payment Scheme).
- For any purpose that does not enable the pupil to travel to/from the school/education setting.
- To travel to activities other than the education setting, for example work experience.
- For any activity that is illegal, unlawful, or unsafe.
- For other purposes that may bring the Council into disrepute.

Anyone found to be mis-using their PTA will have the offer withdrawn with immediate effect and monies reclaimed where applicable.

5. PTA Calculations and Payment Schedule

PTAs are assessed on a case-by-case basis considering individual circumstances. This ensures fairness across all those accessing the scheme (and those interested in the scheme) and that your travel costs will be reimbursed to ensure there is no cost to you for providing this service. Equally it ensures that a profit is not able to be made from the scheme.

PTA is not tax deductible and does not need to be declared as income.

5.1 How is it calculated?

During the application process we will discuss with you how you intend to use the PTA, review the costs that you incur transporting your child to their education setting and a value will be calculated following this. The PTA is not designed to match or cover contracted costs of an alternative service.

The Local Authority retain the right to increase and/ or decrease this value to meet any change in your individual circumstances.

5.2 Payment Schedule

Once the annual PTA has been agreed, this will be paid in 6 equal termly payments, in readiness for the up coming term.

An exception to this is if the parent/ carer needs to purchase a seasonal rail pass or coach pass where the full annual amount will be paid, with no further termly payments being made.

Deductions might be made to your PTA; we work closely with schools to ensure that PTA scheme does not impact your student’s attendance at school. Deductions are made in-line with attendance (i.e. 1 day missed will result in 1 day payment reduction next term).

See below how deductions and payments are made -

School Term	Deduction based on
1 (Sep-Oct)	Term 5 (Apr -Jun) attendance
2 (Nov-Dec)	Term 6 (Jun – Jul) attendance
3 (Jan-Feb)	Term 1 (Sep – Oct) attendance
4 (Feb-Mar)	Term 2 (Nov – Dec) attendance
5 (Apr-Jun)	Term 3 (Jan-Feb) attendance
6 (Jun-Jul)	Term 4 (Feb- Mar) attendance

New Children to the scheme will have the deductions made after at least two terms have passed since joining the scheme. For example, if you start the scheme in September, we will not use Term 5 or 6 attendance to make any deductions. Terms 1 and 2 will be paid at full value, and then Term 3 will be reduced in-line with any attendance in Term 1.

5.3 Repayment Requests

If you do not attend your educational setting for a pro-longed period, we may freeze your next payment rather than making a reduction. This allows the previous payment to be fully used before a further payment is made.

The Local Authority has the right to reclaim monies not being used for its intended purposes as a last resort.

6. Termination of PTA

In some circumstances there may be a time where the local authority or the parent may want to end the PTA agreement. Below outlines the steps that will be taken.

6.1 Parent PTA Contract Termination

If you find yourself in a position where you are not longer able to provide transport for you child. The local authority will work with you to identify other opportunities that may exist with your travel allowance.

Should this not be achievable, you have the right to end the agreement if the council can provide alternative travel arrangements, which meet the child's needs and remains within government spending constraints.

Parent/ carers **must** provide twenty working days' notice in writing to the Home to School transport inbox, confirming child's name and educational setting.

6.2 Local Authority PTA Contract Termination

The Local Authority will look to terminate the PTA contract in the following situations –

- The child is not attending their educational setting or attendance is very low.
- There is a more cost-effective transport provision available, that meets your child needs.
- Payment exceeds the parental cost for providing transport.
- If no notification has been made due to a change in circumstance (For example change of address or school).

Twenty working day notice will be given to parents of the termination. This gives the local authority sufficient time to source a suitable transport provision.

7. Application Process

If your child is new to the Home to School Transport service. We require you to complete an [online](#) application form and follow the instructions.

In this application you **must** do the following –

- State that you are interested in the PTA scheme.
Select the PTA scheme option on Page 4.

If you have travel assistance eligibility, we will be in touch with details on the PTA scheme due to your unique circumstances.

The application will be assessed by a Transport Officer to determine eligibility and travel provision and upon receipt of the application form, the Home to School Transport Team will process the application within twenty working days.

Once an offer of a PTA has been offered after a successful application, the first payment will be pro-rated for the applicable term and the full payment (assuming no deductions) will be paid in readiness for the start of the next full term.

If your child attends a mainstream educational setting and is eligible for free home to school travel assistance, a PTA may be provided if no other transport options are available. This arrangement must be agreed upon mutually by both the Local Authority and you.

If your child already uses Home to School Transport you **must** do the following -

- Email schooltransport@n-somerset.gov.uk stating your student's name, school, and current transport provision.

We will share these details with the allocated transport officer for your child's school and they will be in touch with any PTA offer than we can make (please note, that the offer of a PTA is at the council's discretion and not a guarantee). The officer will aim to be in contact within twenty working days of the receipt of your email with an outcome of your request.

Any offer will take place from the start of the next term as determined on the [councils website](#).

8. Payment Queries

You will receive a remittance statement before a payment is due advising you of the amount paid for that term. Parents **must** confirm within ten working days, in writing, to highlight any discrepancies on this statement. Failure to inform the Home to school transport team may mean that it is not possible to correct this payment at later date.

9. Appeals and Complaints

You are unable to appeal the refusal decision of a PTA offer as a PTA is only available for those eligible for Home to School transport. Your eligibility is not in contention;

however, you are able to have your decision reviewed by following our complaint procedure.

We aim to reply within ten working days. You will be told when a reply will take more than ten working days and given a date to expect a reply.

To register a complaint please do this via the [North Somerset Council Website](#).