

UPDATE TO

Home to school transport consultation for Personal Travel Budgets for children and young people with SEND

Newcastle Council (the **Council**) has, in certain circumstances, a legal duty to provide eligible children with free travel between home and school. One of the ways in which travel assistance can be provided is by a Personal Travel Budget (PTB) to the family. As well as being the most cost-effective way for the Council, it allows parents to have more control over how and when their child is transported to and from school.

Feedback from families tells us that many parents would prefer to take their own child to school rather than have a taxi collect them and bring them home again. However, the current Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is purely a mileage reimbursement and does not provide the flexibility or affordability that parents and carers need.

We are therefore proposing to amend our PTB offer to enable more families to make their own arrangements for getting their child to school. By updating the PTB offer we hope to help families to explore how they can support their young people in a way that works best for individual circumstances. Please note that there is no intention to force families to take a PTB against their wishes, and we will always work with families to find the best solution. This proposal is intended to allow more parents to have control over their child's transport if they wish. We find that PTBs are particularly useful to families when considering options and arrangements as children begin to prepare for adulthood.

What are the options we are thinking about?

The following are possible changes that we could make to ensure that we can continue to offer support where it is most needed.

Option 1

Continue to provide the PTB offer using mileage rates.

Option 2

Introduce a banding system whereby travel assistance is paid to the family based upon the total distance of two return journeys per day from home to school. The following banding rates would be applied:

- Band 1 – Up to 5 miles £2,000 per school year
- Band 2 – Over 5 miles up to 10 miles £3,000 per school year
- Band 3 – Over 10 up to 15 miles £4,000 per school year
- Band 4 – Over 15 up to 20 £5,000 per school year

Band 5 – Over 20 miles - £0.50 per mile to and from the school and based on a standard return trip. Payments are based upon 190 days travelling per school year.

The table below shows how much a family receives under the current offer compared to the proposed offer. Note that the current offer pays on the exact mileage distance, whereas the proposal is to pay on the distance for a journey up to a given distance

Distance from home to school in miles	Current offer Per day	Current offer per year	Proposed offer per day	Proposed offer per year
5	£8	£1,520	£10	£1,900
10	£16	£3,040	£20	£3,800
15	£24	£4,560	£30	£5,700
20	£32	£6,080	£40	£7,600
25	£40	£7,600	£50	£9,500

This offer would enable families to create bespoke arrangements to suit the needs of their family. Examples of how some families already use PTBs are:

- 1) A young person with SEND regularly moves to stay between different family members. As a commissioned taxi can only be provided from the home address, this wasn't working. A PTB was agreed which allowed the family to make arrangements to get the young person to school and avoid disrupting his education.
- 2) Another young person with significant needs was on sole transport. However the transport was often cancelled due to the young person's health needs. This led to providers handing the route back and considerable disruption to the young persons travel due to delays in arranging a new taxi and changes in drivers and escorts. This was distressing for the young person as well as further disrupting their education. A PTB was agreed allowing the family to make their own arrangements to get the young person to school at times when they were able and with consistent familiar adults to support them.

These are purely examples of how some families use a PTB once they have decided that a PTB is the best option for them. There are no restrictions on how a PTB can be used other than to assist a family to enable their child to travel to school.

Please see the frequently asked questions at the end of this document for further information, and to see the difference in the money a family would receive under the existing and the proposed offer.

How do I reply about these proposals?

There are a number of ways that you can tell us what you think is the best option. You can:

- email us at this email address: SENDTPConsultation@newcastle.gov.uk
- complete a simple online form. You open the online form by clicking [here](#).
- come and tell us what you think at one of these drop-in sessions:

- 6 August, 10am-11am at Galafield Family Hub
- 23 August, 11am-12pm at Fawdon Children's Centre
- 3 September, 5pm-6pm at Carnegie Building (Benwell)
- 11 September, 10am-11am at Charlton Street (Lemington)
- 17 September, 4pm-5pm at Byker Sands

Thank you for reading this proposal and for thinking about it. And thank you for telling us what you think. This will help Councillors to make the best decision possible.

This consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 20 September 2024.

10 July 2024

Updated 2 August 2024

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

What is a PTB?

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) is a payment to families to help them to get their child to and from school. The family chooses and makes their own arrangements for home to school transport for their children who are eligible for assistance from SEND Transport.

What are the benefits of a PTB?

A PTB provides freedom and flexibility for families and allows them to organise getting their child to and from school in a way that fits in with their family circumstances. It can allow for access to after school clubs or wraparound child care.

When do I get paid?

Payments are made in advance so that you have the funds to make your arrangements.

How much will my PTB be?

A PTB is calculated based on mileage distance between the home address and the school that your child attends. The amount you will receive is dependent upon the outcome of the consultation.

What can I spend the PTB on?

You can use the PTB in any way you like to help you get your child to and from school. Some examples are:

- buy a bus pass so you can accompany your child to school
- pay someone to take your child to school safely
- contributions towards petrol/diesel costs
- pay for or towards car-share arrangements with other parents/carers such as shared driving responsibilities, walking buses or joint taxi bookings.

Can I stop the PTB if it doesn't work?

PTBs are voluntary. Parents/carers can stop their PTB if your circumstances change but we will require a week's notice to make alternative arrangements and put transport in place if requested. If there are any overpayments due to a change in circumstances such as address or school change then we will reclaim the money via an invoice.

Will receiving a PTB affect my benefits?

No, a PTB doesn't have an impact on benefits.

What financial difference will the new offer make?