Personal Transport Allowance (PTA)

Guidance for parents/carers

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1. Introduction

The following is to be used as guidance for further information on Personal Transport Allowances (PTA).

This document expands on the Local Authorities home to school guidance policy, providing further context on the PTA aspect.

2. What is a Personal Transport Allowance?

The PTA, formerly known as the Personal Transport Budget (PTB), is a financial allowance provided by the local authority to assist parents or carers in arranging travel assistance for young people who require support traveling to and from their educational establishment (school, college, outreach, etc).

The PTA offers flexibility to families, while ensuring cost-effectiveness and compliance with statutory duties under the Education Act 1996 and Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (DfE, 2014).

3. Examples of how a PTA can be used.

A. **Fuel Costs & mileage** – Using the allowance to cover fuel expenses for driving you child to and from school/college.
B. **Car Leasing or maintenance** – Contributing towards leasing a suitable vehicle or maintaining an existing one to ensure reliable transport.
C. **Public transport fares** – Expenses towards purchasing bus, tube, train, or tram tickets for the young person or an accompanying adult where necessary.
D. **Taxi or private hire services** – Arranging transport through a licensed taxi or private hire company.
E. **Hiring a personal assistant (PA) or carer** – Paying for a trusted PA or carer to accompany the child on their journey to school or college.
F. **Shared transport with other families** – Pooling resources with other parents/carers to arrange joint transport, such as hiring a minibus or rotating driving responsibilities.
G. **Specialist transport needs** – Contributions towards the cost of adaptations for wheelchair-accessible vehicles or other specialist transport requirements.
H. **Flexible drop-off and pick-up locations** – Arranging transport that accommodates before- or after-school clubs, respite care, or alternative drop-off points.

4. Benefits of a PTA

- Flexibility to arrange transport in a way that best suits your personal circumstances and schedule
- Greater control over the transport services or resources used to support your child or young person's needs.
- The ability to coordinate shared transport with other families, allowing for more efficient use of your budget, this could include carpooling, group transport, or walking buses.
- Freedom to decide when and where your child is picked up or dropped off, making it easier to accommodate after-school activities or alternative drop-off locations, such as a relative's home.
- An opportunity to promote independence by helping your child develop essential travel and life skills through the use of public transport, where suitable.

5. How does a PTA work?

- Each month we will transfer the young person's agreed PTA into your chosen bank account.
- One-off contributions will be paid within 5 working days, where possible.
- Attendance records will be verified before payments are made.
- Each year the travel assistance will be reviewed to make sure it is the most efficient arrangement.
- You must spend the money in a way that ensures the young person can get to their educational establishment.

6. What can the PTA not be used towards?

- Towards securing a space on Transport Services provided by the Local Authority. This includes Local Authority arranged transport for post 16 pupils.
- For any other purpose other than facilitating the young person to travel to and from their educational setting.
- For activities other than travelling to and from the young persons educational setting. For example, to work experience or to an activity that takes place outside of the educational establishment and is independent to the educational establishment.
- For any activity that is illegal, unlawful or unsafe

7. How to Apply

For further information on the application process please refer to the linked guidance.

7.1. For a summary, please see below:

1. Obtain on application form. Application forms can be obtained on the local offer page.
2. Complete the form, clearly indicating that you are applying for a PTA.
3. Return the completed form to the Transport Brokering Team (TBT).
4. Provide any supporting documents, such as: Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), quotes, service agreement, medical advice, etc.
5. Your application will be reviewed by a panel, before a final decision is issued.

7.2. Before PTA payments commence:

1. You must sign an agreement form which outlines the terms and conditions.
2. You must provide proof of bank details for the nominated account.

8. Duration of PTA Provision

PTAs are reviewed annually to ensure continued eligibility and suitability. However, payments may be terminated, suspended, or adjusted under certain conditions (see Section 9).

9. Payment Details

Payments are made monthly, either in arrears or upfront, depending on individual circumstances.

Payments will be deposited into the nominated bank account provided during the application process.

10. Signed agreement

Before any payments are made a signed agreement form is to be completed by the Local Authority and the service user. This initiates an agreement/contract between the service user and the Local Authority.

The signed agreement form will indicate the terms of the agreement and the rate that has been agreed to be paid to the service user.

Payments will only be released once the signed agreement form has been completed.

Failure to adhere to the terms of the signed agreement form may result in termination of the PTA.

11. Notification of Changes to Transport Arrangements

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to notify the local authority of any changes that may affect the PTA. These changes will be assessed based on their impact on the current arrangement and may require additional action.

11.1. Major Changes

Major changes are significant and often require reassessment by the SEN Transport Panel. Examples include:

- Change of educational establishment - If your child moves to a new school or college, the PTA agreement must be reviewed to reflect the new distance or circumstances.
- Significant cost differences: If a new travel solution incurs higher or significantly lower costs, the PTA may need to be recalculated.
- Change of address - Moving to a new address may alter the eligibility or cost of travel assistance.

Failure to provide notice of any major change within 5 working days may cause delay or issue with payment.

For major changes the Local Authority will reassess the PTA arrangements. This may require submitting a new request to the SEN Transport Panel to reassess eligibility and the travel assistance provided.

11.2. Minor Changes

Minor adjustments are small changes that do not significantly alter the PTA arrangement. Examples include:

- Choosing an alternative taxi provider, but fees remain the same.
- Modifying travel times slightly due to changes in school hours.

The local authority will review or take note of minor changes promptly for auditing purposes. No new application is typically required for minor adjustments.

11.3. Potential Outcomes

- Recalculation - The PTA may be recalculated to reflect the new circumstances.
- Temporary suspension - Payments may be temporarily suspended while the changes are reviewed.
- Termination - If changes make the PTA arrangement unsuitable, the agreement may be terminated, and alternative travel assistance offered.
- Approval of adjustment -For minor changes, the PTA may continue without disruption.

12. Responsibilities of PTA Recipients

By accepting a PTA, you agree to:

- Use the PTA exclusively for home to school travel assistance.
- Keep receipts and records of PTA expenditure. Auditing requirements will be outlined upon agreement.
- Ensure compliance with relevant rules if employing someone directly (e.g., Tax, National Insurance, Employment Law, Health and Safety).
- Provide the local authority with copies of contracts or service level agreements if PTA funds are used for such purposes.

Failure to comply may result in reclaiming of funds or suspension/termination of the PTA.

13. Appeals Process

If your application is denied or you wish to challenge a decision, you can follow the appeals process

Stage One: Submit a written appeal within 20 working days of the decision, outlining your case and supporting evidence. A senior officer will review and respond within 20 working days.

Stage Two: If unresolved, escalate the appeal to an independent panel, which will notify you of its decision within 40 working days.

For full details, refer to the appeals guidance document

14. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1: How much is the PTA?

The PTA is calculated based on the distance from your home to your child's school or college, the number of school days attended, and any additional considerations, such as your child's specific needs. A standardised mileage rate is calculated at £0.45p mile.

Many available maps and internet-based measuring tools will give you an indication of the distance from your home to the young persons educational establishment, but this is only an indication. The distance measured is based on a straight-line distance (as the crow flies).

If your child is aged between 16-19 years old then the fixed rate for a PTA are as follows:

- Less than 5 miles: annual budget = £1500
- 5-10 miles: annual budget = £2500
- Over 10 miles: annual budget = £3500

Q2: Can I use the PTA for public transport expenses for myself to accompany my child?

Yes, public transport costs for accompanying parents/carers are an allowable use of the PTA.

Q3: Do college students qualify for the PTA?

Yes, students in post-16 education are eligible to apply. The eligible age group is between 5-25 years old.

Q4: What happens if I have more than one child attending the same school?

The PTA for multiple children is assessed on a case-by-case basis and may not always be the full amount for each child. For example, if the Local Authority is already providing a PTA to cover the full expenses of a taxi to take a young person to school, then the Local Authority may not provide additional funding for a sibling that is due to attend the same school as their sibling.

Q5: Do I need to submit receipts every month?

It is the parents/carers responsibility to keep any evidence of payments such as receipts or invoices. The local authority will outline specific auditing requirements when the PTA is agreed. You may be asked to provide receipts upon request.

Q6: Can the PTA be used for non-transport-related expenses?

No. The PTA must only be used for travel assistance to facilitate attendance at your child's educational establishment. Misuse may result in reclaiming of funds.

Q7: Will PTA payments impact my benefits?

No, PTA payments are not classed as income and are not taxable. However, parents/carers are advised to confirm this with any relevant agencies regarding their individual circumstances.

Q8: Can I terminate the PTA?

Yes, you can terminate the PTA by providing one month's notice. Any unused funds will be reclaimed by the local authority.

Q9: What to do if you have not received payment?

Contact the Transport Brokering Team immediately to investigate. Where delays are expected for reasons beyond the Transport Brokering Teams control, notice will be provided to parent/carers upon Transport Brokerings awareness.

Q10: What if I receive the incorrect amount?

Contact the Transport Brokering Team to investigate. Any valid discrepancies will be rectified.

Q11: How long does it take to receive payment?

Once an agreement is in place, it takes roughly 3-5 working days to be set up on the payment systems and for payment to be made.

Q12: Can I apply for a PTA if my child does not have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)?

The Local Authority will assess each request on a case by case basis in line with the eligibility criteria, in the Home to School Guidance Policy. The Local Authority will also exercise discretionary powers when required. You do not require an EHCP to request travel assistance; vice versa, having an EHCP does not mean an automatic entitlement to travel assistance.

Q13: How is the monthly figure calculated?

Payments are made in line with attendance records and/or evidence of receipts. The Transport Brokering will check attendance records with the educational establishment on a monthly basis. Where payments have been made upfront, the following months payments will be adjusted to reflect attendance records and to make up the difference. Any discrepancies with attendance records would need to be rectified by the educational establishment.

Q14: Can I employ someone or enter into a contract(s) using the PTA?

A PTA can contribute towards these costs, but parents/carers are responsible for ensuring compliance with any contract(s), relevant laws and regulations. This includes but not limited to:

- Tax
- National insurance
- Employment laws
- Appropriate insurance
- Health and Safety
- Any other applicable legislation
- DBS checks
- Payment schedules

Likewise, if the PTA is used to enter into agreements with organisations, such as after-school clubs, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to adhere to the terms of those agreements. This includes fulfilling any payment obligations and following the required cancellation policies.

These agreements would be independent to the Local Authority and strictly between the service user (parent/carer) & the provider. Thus the Local Authority would not be reliable for any breaches of the terms between the service user & the provider.

The Local Authority may request evidence before a PTA is agreed for this option.

Q15: Who can the PTA payments be made to?

LBB cannot make payments directly to anyone under the age of 18 and it is the parent/carer who remains responsible for their child's attendance at college or sixth form.

Payments cannot be made to the educational establishment or the chosen travel solution (for e.g directly to a taxi company or service provider chosen by the parents/carers). The payments will be made directly to the parent/carer to use towards their travel assistance solution if the young person is under 18.

15. Contact Information

For assistance or further information, contact:
Transport Brokering Team (TBT)

Email: transport.brokering@barnet.gov.uk

Phone: 020 8359 7843

Address: Transport Brokering Team,

2 Bristol Avenue,

Colindale, London,

NW9 4EW