

Common myths and misconceptions about the Transport assessment process

Myth 1: “Transport will be automatically awarded if it has previously been awarded to a sibling”

False: Although the transport eligibility criteria have remained relatively unchanged for a number of years, ensuring consistent decisions are made, each child is assessed on the basis of their circumstances at the time of their application. As circumstances can change it is entirely possible for transport to have previously been awarded for one sibling and subsequently refused for another. Where this is the case, and the family remain at the same address, the key factor creating the disparity is likely to be the school deemed to be the nearest to the home address with an available place at the time of application.

Myth 2: “A family in my area has received transport assistance, I should therefore be entitled to it as well”

False: In assessing a transport application, we consider the individual circumstances at the time of the application. While two children may live in the same area it is not necessarily the case that their circumstances will be the same. For example, the school determined to be the nearest with available places may be different or one child may be entitled to transport on the basis of extended eligibility provided to low income families.

Myth 3: “I can choose the mode of transport that my child is to receive”

False: We are responsible for providing transport for any child that is entitled to it. We will only provide transport by the most cost effective means possible and parents are unable to request the mode of transport that might be provided.

Myth 4: “My child has after school or extracurricular activities to attend - You can alter the times of my child’s transport to accommodate these”

False: In line with Surrey’s Home to School Transport policy we are only able to provide transport assistance at the start and end of the school day.

Myth 5: “My child can be picked up or dropped off at a location other than my home”

False: In line with Surrey’s Home to School Transport policy, and for safeguarding purposes, we are only able to provide transport assistance between a child’s home and their school.

Myth 6: “I am on a low income or receiving Job Seekers Allowance – I am automatically entitled to transport assistance”

False: In certain cases low income families may be entitled to transport assistance. Low income, in relation to home to school transport eligibility, is specifically defined as those families who are either in receipt of the maximum level of working tax credit, or whose child is entitled to free school meals.

Myth 7: “Google Maps shows a different nearest school from the school that you have deemed to be the nearest”

False: We use a specialised system to calculate the distances between a child’s home and each school. This system has been specifically designed for this purpose and is able to calculate the distance between an individual residence and the nearest applicable school gate to the nearest metre, with a high level of accuracy. To ensure consistency this is the only system that we use to assess home to school distances.

Myth 8: “My job means that I am unable to drop off/collect my child, I should be entitled to transport”

False: Transport eligibility criteria do not take into account a parents’ availability to transport their child to and from school. It is a parent’s duty to ensure their child is receiving full time education, which includes ensuring their child is transport to and from school. Only where a child is entitled under to free home to school transport, where they are attending the nearest qualifying school and this is over distance, is the local authority then responsible for providing transport. In view of this, we do not take a parent’s work commitments into account as part of the transport assessment process.

Myth 9: “My child attends an independent school, this should count as their nearest school”

False: The Department for Education’s Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance sets out the schools to be included in the transport eligibility assessment. With the exception of non-maintained Special Schools, other non-maintained independent schools are not included in the guidance. As such, we do not include independent schools as part of our transport assistance assessment.

Myth 10: “I am allowed to drive my child to school and claim for fuel reimbursement”

False: We can only provide a fuel reimbursement where this is deemed to be the most cost effective method of transport available. You will only be able to claim a fuel reimbursement if this has been agreed in advance.

Myth 11: “I don’t need to inform the Admissions and Transport team if I move home or if my child moves school”

False: As an applicant’s eligibility for transport assistance is dependent on them attending the nearest available school and that school being over the statutory walking distance from their home, it is entirely possible for an applicant’s transport eligibility to change when they move home or school. Accordingly, recipients will need to inform the Admissions and Transport team if they move home or school.

Myth 12: “Out of county schools do not count as part of the transport assessment”

False: Qualifying schools are defined as being those with a vacancy which provide education that is appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. This is regardless of whether the school is within the county of Surrey.

However, where an out of County school is identified as a child’s nearest qualifying school and the distance of the walking route to that school would mean that transport would need to be provided, free home to school transport will be made available if the child is attending their nearest geographical Surrey school (measured by the shortest road route), subject to the distance thresholds appropriate to the age of the child being met.

Myth 13: “I have received transport assistance as I am entitled to free school meals or I receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credits. I will automatically receive transport next year”

False: As circumstances may change, we will review transport assistance awarded under the above criteria annually.

Myth 14: “I will be entitled to transport assistance as the route to my child’s school is unsafe”

False: A child should usually be attending their nearest qualifying school to be eligible for transport assistance.

If a child is at their nearest qualifying school and there are concerns about the safety of the route, we will arrange for the safety of the route to be assessed. In these cases transport may be awarded if the route is deemed to be unsafe.

However, we are unable to consider the safety of the route in cases where a child is not attending their nearest qualifying school.