

Somerset County Council Travel Policy Statement 2019/20 for learners aged 16-19 in Further education and Training, and continuing learners aged 19 -25

Introduction

Beyond the end of Year 11, Somerset County Council does not have a statutory duty to provide home to school (including academies and free schools)/college transport free of charge for students age 16 to 19. However, in order to promote access to education and opportunities for all young people in the County, Somerset County Council will provide transport options for students aged between 16 and 19 to access Post 16 education at a school sixth form, further education establishment, a Local Authority commissioned learning provider or attending College as part of a work-based learning course.

Somerset County Council, in consultation with stakeholders and other partnerships, work together to ensure that the individual needs of young people are paramount, whilst balancing equality of access to education and training opportunities with value for money by:

- Developing a collective strategy relating to post 16 school/college travel assistance within the context of Government, EFA (Education Funding Agency) and Somerset County Council strategies
- Identifying gaps in travel provision and filling those gaps to improve accessibility to education and to maximise choice of learning venue
- Improving travel information for all young people and adult learners
- Discussing priorities with local education and training providers
- Focusing on improving travel for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by providing subsidised specialised travel assistance where needed or through the Somerset Independent Travel Training Scheme in order to increase the independence for this group of learners
- Improving travel links in deeply rural areas by maintaining the provision of demand responsive travel schemes and affordable access to learning for young people, improving their employment opportunities and reducing social exclusion

- Enabling travel provision to remove barriers to learning and training for those from vulnerable groups and/or those most likely not to be in education, employment or training

Student Tickets

County Ticket - Somerset County Council - the Local Authority (LA) - offer a student bus pass in the form of the 'County Ticket' to enable young people to attend the learning/training centre of their choice provided applicants meet the Somerset County Council eligibility criteria of:-

- Being over the statutory school leaving age of 16 on 01 September 2019; and
- Attending a course of further education or training compliant with legislation relating to the raising of the participation age

The County Ticket will cost £810 the 2019/20 academic year. There is a direct debit option to enable students to spread the payment over the year. The electronic ticket is interoperable, which means it is available for use across the public transport network in Somerset.

Currently, where space is available on the contracted School Transport fleet, students may also apply for a County Ticket for these routes. Students can use these tickets to access the public network at other times.

Post 16 students attending Diploma courses, Foundation Learning and apprenticeships can access both college/school-based provision and work placements by using the County Ticket.

Travel assistance to academies will be on the same basis as for local authority schools with sixth forms (i.e. free pre-16 for those that qualify and purchase of a County Ticket for post 16 students where space is available).

Currently no form of means testing is applied to the County Ticket.

The County Ticket entitles the holder to travel throughout Somerset and on cross border routes to and from Wiltshire, Dorset, Devon, North Somerset and Bath & North East Somerset.

Unless stated otherwise, students may use these flexible tickets to travel at any time of the day, evenings, on weekends and during College holidays. Full details of operators providing unrestricted and restricted County Ticket services can be found on the application form and at the end of this document.

Please note that the County Ticket may not be the most-cost effective ticket for all students.

Other Student Ticket Offers available for the 2019/20 Academic Year –

(Please note that all fares are correct at the time of publication on 31st May 2019)

Other tickets available from operators to either purchase in advance or on the bus, may be more cost-effective than the County Ticket in certain circumstances. The list below is not comprehensive, and you are strongly advised to contact the operator of the service you intend to use directly or visit their website to check single, day return and any other season tickets they may be able to offer you. The contact details for all bus operators are listed on page 16 of this policy document.

Buses of Somerset

A £25 five-day ticket is available to purchase through the mobile phone mTicket App which allows travel on any five days (not consecutive) and is valid on all Buses of Somerset services on the days the ticket is activated.

Buses of Somerset also offer a weekly ticket for young people up to the age of 16 which costs £12.50. For further details on these options please contact the operator.

A 20-day bundle ticket is also available which costs £90 for an adult ticket and £45 for young people up to the age of 16.

Hatch Green Coaches

A £5-day return ticket will be available from 1 September 2019 on College days only for bus services 10C, 19, 23, 23B, 51, 613 and 624.

For all other Hatch Green bus services please contact the operator.

First West of England

Young people (16-21) and students (of any age if in full time education) can get up to 30% discount on all tickets across the West of England (Bristol, Bath, Weston-super-Mare & Wells).

Specific student tickets available are:

- West of England Day Ticket for students £4.20 per day mTicket app or £4.90 paper ticket purchase.

- West of England Weekly Ticket for students £15.40 per week mTicket app or £18.20 to purchase on the bus
- West of England Monthly Ticket for Students £56.00 per month mTicket app (it is not possible to purchase a monthly ticket on the bus)
- West of England Yearly Ticket for students £588.00 per annum mTicket app (it is not possible to purchase an annual ticket on the bus)

Students must be in full time education and can show any student photo ID in order to purchase these specific student tickets

South West Coaches

A £5-day return ticket will be available from 1 September 2019 on College days only for bus services 646, 647, 648, and 652.

For all other South West Coaches bus services please contact the operator.

Libra Travel

A £5-day return ticket will be available from 1 September 2019 on College days only for bus services 31, 668, 519 and 649.

For all other Libra Travel bus services please contact the operator.

Financial Support for post-16 students

16-19 Bursary Fund

If you're aged between 16 and 19 years and think you might struggle with the costs for full-time education or training, you can apply to your college for a bursary. The bursary scheme is made up of two elements:

1: A bursary of £1,200 per year if you are considered to be vulnerable; The definition of 'vulnerable' includes: those students who are in care or a care leaver; students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit; those students receiving Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and/ or in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). If you qualify the bursary will be paid direct from your school or college.

2: A discretionary award if you are facing financial barriers This can include if you are having difficulty in meeting the costs of transport, meals, books and/or equipment. Your college or training provider is responsible for deciding who is eligible, how much to pay and how regularly it will be paid. The college or training provider will usually want to see evidence, for example a letter regarding your benefits.

If you have any concerns following the college's decision regarding your application for a bursary then please contact Transporting Somerset within the Local Authority

Discretionary Support Funds

Funding bodies give colleges money so that they can make hardship grants available to their students. These funds are aimed at helping disadvantaged students with the costs of further education, for example, because they have a low income or have a disability.

Each college has their own policy on who is eligible for funding and what they will provide grants for. Grants can cover the cost of:

- childcare and related transport costs
- course related books and equipment
- transport to and from college
- course field trips
- examination fees.

Please contact your Student Support or Welfare Officer at the college for further information and help in applying.

Care to Learn Bursaries

The intention of Care to Learn (C2L) provides help for young parents (defined as those aged under 20) to continue in education after the birth of a child. It provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study Programme and is not able to provide care for their child. C2L can also help with travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider.

Support available from Colleges in Somerset

This will vary between Colleges. The information below has been provided by the main FE Colleges in Somerset confirming the support available.

Bridgwater & Taunton College

At the time of publication this information was unavailable. Please contact Bridgwater and Taunton College on 01278 455464 or info@btc.ac.uk for further information on support available.

Richard Huish College

One-off Travel Contribution - This is a payment of £100 to students who hold a County Ticket after the 1st November. The payment is paid the first week of December once the College have been notified of students holding a ticket by Somerset County Council. Please note if you are eligible for a travel bursary award through the Discretionary Bursary (see below) you will not receive the £100 Travel contribution.

Discretionary Bursary - Students may receive a bursary of up to £600 towards the purchase of the County Ticket. The college will also support the purchase of an independent operator ticket if this a cheaper option for your travel to college up to 75% of the monthly costs.

To apply for the above financial support, once you have enrolled at Richard Huish College, please register at <https://richardhuish.paymystudent.com/portal/> using your College ID number and date of birth and then complete the on-line application form.

Strode College

At the time of publication this information was unavailable. Please contact Strode College on 01458 844400 or courseinfo@strode-college.ac.uk for further information on support available

Yeovil College

At the time of publication this information was unavailable. Please contact Yeovil College on 01935 845444 or enrol@yeovil.ac.uk for further information on support available

Support available from Somerset County Council

There is currently no means testing through Somerset County Council for assistance with travel costs and the student contribution to the cost of their ticket is the same for all. However, for those suffering financial hardship or personal difficulties, please see the section above on support.

Petrol allowances are available at 18 pence per mile up to a limit of £135.00 per annum to allow young people living more than three miles from their nearest bus stop to gain access to and from the local bus network. These allowances are not means tested. Students can request an application form for the petrol allowance via email to transport@somerset.gov.uk or telephone 0300 123 2224

Students who are recent Care Leavers and require financial assistance should contact their social worker or leaving care worker, and/or their College. The College will be able to provide advice on bursaries available.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

All eligible students will have to pay a contribution of £810 for the 2019/20 academic year. For applications received after the start of term the full contribution amount will still apply.

In addition to the County Ticket option, Somerset County Council may provide a specialist travel service where it assesses that the proposed course is appropriate and special travel arrangements are necessary in order for the student to access the course.

Travel assistance is provided via the most cost-effective method. Suitable travel arrangements can include:

- A bus or train pass
- A seat on a minibus
- A seat in a taxi
- A fuel allowance or a personal travel payment (in exceptional circumstances only where it is not possible for the Council to provide subsidised travel to an eligible student).

Travel assistance is for one return journey from a designated pick up point (not necessarily the home address) to the school/establishment during standard academic terms only and at the official start and end of the School/College day. Travel assistance cannot be provided to meet a student's individual timetable. Additional journeys outside of the start and end of the School/College Day will be the responsibility of the student, parent or carer to arrange and fund.

Travel assistance is not provided for induction days, transitional periods, medical appointments nor work experience.

Where the course the student is studying is on a split site, assistance will only be provided to the main qualifying campus.

If an establishment is named in a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) it does not necessarily mean travel assistance will be provided by the

local authority. An application for travel assistance will need to be submitted and an assessment for eligibility undertaken.

When the LA receives an application for travel assistance to the relevant establishment, we will consider the following information:-

- Whether the student is a Somerset resident
- The age and needs of the student
- The distance to the relevant establishment (over 3 miles statutory walking distance). Further evidence will be required if the student does not meet this requirement.
- The length of the journey in relation to the needs of the young person
- Whether the student can use public service vehicles. Lack of public service vehicles in an area is not in itself a reason to provide individual transport
- Proven progression/benefits on chosen course
- Whether the student is applying for transport to their nearest college, 6th form college or school offering their chosen or a **comparable** (not necessarily the same) course.
- Be attending a full-time course (a minimum of 540 hours per year – approximately 14 hours per week – of supervised study across three academic terms.

Travel assistance for SEND students who reach the age of 19 (sixth form age duty) while continuing on a course

Travel assistance, where approved, will continue for the initial course of study until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes 19 years of age. However, assistance will be reviewed throughout the course and independent travel encouraged.

Support for SEND students aged 19-25 (Adult learners)

Applications for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged between 19 and 24 years of age for travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis for a first course of study. This is for students with the most severe disabilities with no other means of transportation.

An assessment will be made of the application taking account of this Travel Policy Statement, the particular circumstances of the applicant and the case for assistance with travel.

Where travel assistance is agreed, it will normally continue during the agreed course of study until the end of the academic year in which the students 25th birthday occurs. However, travel assistance will be reviewed throughout the course and independent travel encouraged. Please note that there will be no contribution charge for these learners.

Application process for SEND students

All applicants will need to complete an application for travel assistance annually (for returning students) which can be found here:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=41829>

Each subsequent application will be assessed taking into account the student's progression on the course and their individual needs. The LA will take advice from the education establishment attended, social worker (if appropriate), qualified assessment officer and, where appropriate, other agencies.

It should not be assumed that assistance with travel assistance will automatically be provided each year.

Independent Travel Training Scheme for SEND students

Somerset County Council employs Independent Travel Trainers who work with appropriate students to train them to travel independently. Students are trained in road safety awareness, using money for travel and safe independent travel. Whilst the student is training the cost of travel will be covered by the Travel Trainers. If the independent travel training has been successful the student will be required to purchase a County Ticket that will allow them to travel to and from School/College on all local bus services within Somerset, subject to individual bus operator restrictions. Please note refusal to participate in this scheme may result in travel assistance being withdrawn.

Appeals and Complaints Process – All students

If a student is not happy with the service they receive they should contact Transporting Somerset (see the contact details below) and ask for details of the Somerset County Council Complaints procedure.

If a student wishes to appeal against a decision made by the Council concerning entitlement to transport assistance for students with SEND then please contact the Admissions and Entitlements team. For all other applications please contact Transporting Somerset who will be able to offer advice and guidance about the review process.

Useful Contact Numbers for students with learning disabilities and/or other disabilities

Avalon School 01458 443081

Bath College (Somer Valley Campus) 01225 312191

Bridgwater & Taunton College (Bridgwater campus) 01278 455464

Bridgwater & Taunton College (Cannington campus) 01278 455464

Bridgwater & Taunton College (Taunton campus) 01823 366366

Critchill School 01373 464148

Fairmead School 01935 421295

Fiveways School 01935 476227

Penrose School 01278 411222

Richard Huish College 01823 320800

Selworthy School 01823 284970

Somerset County Council 0300 123 2224

Strode College 01458 844400

Wiltshire College Trowbridge 01225 350035

Yeovil College 01935 423921

When should learners start to apply for transport support?

As early as possible, preferably during the Spring or Summer terms prior to their start at college/sixth form/school in the following September. All students should apply before the 7 August to ensure that a County Ticket can be produced in time for the start of term. Applicants with learning disabilities and /or other disabilities should refer to the information provided above and apply before 7th June 2019. Late applications may not be processed in time for the start of term.

What help is available to learners who need to travel to a course that is beyond the Somerset Local Authority area?

If the chosen course is unavailable in Somerset, or the 'out of county' college is the nearest college to the student's home that offers the course, or a similar suitable course, then, provided they meet the eligibility criteria, they will be offered a County Ticket. If there is no public transport available, then a travel allowance will be offered up to a maximum of £135.00 per year.

What help is available for learners who attend a further education institution which is beyond daily travelling distance and they need to lodge away from home?

Termly travel is offered i.e. one journey at the start of term and one journey at the end of term. Additional trips home must be facilitated and funded by parents.

Some students who need to live away from home in order to attend the course may apply for a 'Residential Bursary' and should enquire about this at the Further Education institution they will attend.

Information concerning all points of contact for learners seeking transport support (including website addresses).

Somerset County Council, Transporting Somerset, PPC302, County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY.

Tel: 0300 123 2224

www.somerset.gov.uk

Transport to 16+ schools and FE Colleges

Post 16 Transport Policy

<http://moneytolearn.direct.gov.uk>

Local Bus Services

Contact Traveline: 0871 200 22 33 or <http://www.travelinesw.com>

Community Transport /Dial-Ride services/Student Bike Loans

<https://www.travelsomerset.co.uk> 0845 345 9155

Somerset Colleges and Schools with Sixth Forms (which may also offer assistance with transport and 16-19 Bursary funds):

The Blue School

Phone: 01749 678799

www.theblueschoolwells.co.uk

Bridgwater & Taunton College (Bridgwater Campus)

Tel: 01278 455464

www.bridgwater.ac.uk

Bridgwater & Taunton College (Taunton Campus)

Tel: 01823 366366

www.bridgwater.ac.uk

Frome Community College

Phone: 01373 465353

www.fromecollege.somerset.sch.uk

Holyrood Academy

Phone: 01460 260100

www.holyroodacademy.com

Huish Episcopi Academy

Phone: 01458 250501

www.huishepiscopi.net

King Alfred School
Phone: 01278 784881
www.tkasa.org.uk

The Kings of Wessex Academy
Phone: 01934 742608
www.kowessex.co.uk

Midsomer Norton Sixth Form
Phone: 01761 402280
www.msnsixth.com

Richard Huish College
01823 320800
www.huish.ac.uk

Somervale School
Phone: 01761 414276
www.somervaleschool.com
(Contracted Routes only)

The Space, Heathfield Community School
Phone: 01823 412396
www.thespacesomerset.co.uk

Strode College
Tel: 01458 844400
www.strode-college.ac.uk

The Taunton Academy
Phone: 01823 348200
www.thetauntonacademy.com

Wadham School
Phone: 01460 270123
www.wadhamschool.co.uk

West Somerset College
Phone: 01643 706061
www.westsomersetcollege.org

Writhlington School
Phone: 01761 433581
www.writhlington.org.uk

Yeovil College
01935 423921
www.yeovil.ac.uk

Neighbouring Schools and Colleges:

Bath College
Phone: 01225 312191
www.bathcollege.ac.uk

Bicton College
Phone: 0330 123 4782
www.bicton.ac.uk

Exeter College
Phone: 01392 400500
www.exe-coll.ac.uk

The Gryphon School
Phone: 01935 813122
www.gryphon.dorset.sch.uk

Petroc College (Tiverton Campus)
Phone: 01884 235200
www.petroc.ac.uk

St Augustines
Phone: 01225 350001
www.st-augustines.wilts.sch.uk

Saint Gregory's Bath
Phone: 01225 832873
www.st-gregorys.org.uk

Weston College
Phone: 01934 411411
www.weston.ac.uk

Wiltshire College
Phone: 01225 350035
www.wiltshire.ac.uk

Major Bus Operators in Somerset:

Berry's Coaches 01823 331356

<https://www.berryscoaches.co.uk/>

Peter Clifford House, Great Western Way, Taunton TA2 6BX

First West of England 0345 602 0121

<https://www.firstgroup.com/bristol-bath-and-west>

Enterprise House, Easton Rd, Bristol BS5 0DZ

Buses of Somerset 0345 6020121

<https://www.firstgroup.com/somerset>

Taunton Bus Station, Tower Street, TA1 4AF

FromeBus 01373 471474

<http://www.fromebus.co.uk/>

George's Ground, Marston Trading Estate, Frome BA11 4RP

Hatch Green Coaches 01823 480338

<https://hatchgreencoaches.co.uk/>

Hatch Green Garage, Hatch Beauchamp, TA3 6TN

Libra Travel 01373 812255

Buckland Down Cottage, Buckland Down, Buckland Dinham

Frome BA11 2RG

Ridlers Coaches 01398 323398

<http://ridlers.co.uk/>

Jury Rd Garage, Dulverton TA22 9EJ

South West Coaches 01963 33124

<http://www.southwestcoaches.co.uk/>

Southgate Rd, Wincanton BA9 9EB

Dartline Coaches 01392 872900

<https://www.dartline-coaches.co.uk/>

Langdon Business Park, Clyst St Mary, Exeter, Devon, EX5 1AF