

Personal Transport Budgets

An Information Guide for Parents/ Carers of Children with SEN or Looked After Children

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What is a Personal Transport Budget?

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) is a payment designed to help you make arrangements which will enable you to facilitate your child accessing school.

You can use the budget in any way you wish, to ensure your child attends school every day, on time and in a fit state to learn. For example, it can help towards covering the costs of running a family car or arranging with another member of the family or friends to assist with childcare, enabling you to make the journey.

The payment can also be put to use by arranging childcare for a younger sibling whilst the older sibling is taken to school in the family car.

The payment is a fixed amount based on proximity and bears no relationship to the cost of a taxi or hired vehicle.

It is expensive for the Local Authority to collect children daily using hired vehicles and it has been found by parents who already receive a PTB, that their children are more relaxed going to and from school when they are transported by someone close to the child. It also provides parents with a direct link to the school

Who can be considered for a PTB?

A PTB is available to children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or looked after children in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council and who have been assessed as eligible to receive home to school transport. The PTB is granted at the discretion of the Local Authority and is not automatically given upon request.

Parent/carers seeking to access the PTB must be found to be eligible for transport assistance before being considered for a PTB. Information on how to apply for Home to School Transport is available at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport

Whilst the local authority is keen to promote the use of personal transport budgets If your child is eligible to receive transport assistance, we will review the assistance that is already available before agreeing a PTB.

How do I apply?

You can apply for a PTB at www.centralbedfordshirecouncil.gov.uk/personaltransportbudget

Alternatively, you can indicate your preference for a PTB by ticking the relevant box on your school transport application, which can be found at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport

Please be aware that PTB applications require additional information about journey costs from transport providers and so can take longer to assess than standard transport applications. If your child is not already traveling to school in a Central Bedfordshire Council provided vehicle, you will be responsible for organising alternative transport arrangements while your assessment is completed.

How much would I expect to receive?

The amount of money that is awarded is based on the distance between your home and the school your child attends. Many available maps and internet based measuring tools will give you an indication of the distance from your home to your child's school, but this is only an indication. The distance measured is based on a straight line distance (as the crow flies) and the Council's own measuring software is used to determine this. For fairness and consistency, the same software is used for all applications.

There are four distance bands in which you would expect to receive a payment.

Band

Home to school distance:

Band 1 less than 5 miles £2,000

Band 2 Between 5 – 9 miles £3,000

Band 3 10 -19 miles £5,000,

Band 4 over 20 miles £8,000

PTB payments are made on the basis of your child attending school for 190 days per year. If your child attends school less than 190 school days per school year, Central Bedfordshire Council will make your PTB payment on a pro rata basis. This means you will receive less than the total amount outlined above.

Should your child be absent from school, even if this is through no fault of their own, your following month's payment will be reduced to account for the reduction in required travel. Free school transport is also not available for work experience or additional journeys that the school requires your child to take. You will be notified of the reduction that will be made in the following month's payment before that month's payment is due to be paid.

Would I receive the PTB until my child finishes at the school they attend?

The PTB is not guaranteed to be provided until a child leaves their current school. Central Bedfordshire Council will review your child's PTB at least once a year. The review will evaluate whether it remains cost effective for the PTB to be provided and new transport options may mean this is no longer the case. The review will also check your child's attendance records to ensure your child is being taken to school.

If your child's attendance at school is not sufficient to continue paying you a PTB or where there is more cost effective transport in place, the PTB may be withdrawn. If this should happen, you will be given 28 days' notice.

If there are reasons why your child is no longer eligible for transport or if their EHCP ceases to be maintained the PTB will be withdrawn.

What should I do if my circumstances change?

If your child moves home or changes school, you must ensure that you let Central Bedfordshire Council know as soon as possible, but no later than 4 weeks before the change is due to take place. Your child's eligibility to receive a PTB would then be reassessed. Whilst you may have received the PTB previously, it does not mean that you will automatically continue to receive the budget from another address to the same school or from the same address to another school. Any transport arrangements that are required after the change but before your child has been reassessed will be the parent's responsibility to arrange.

Where payments are made and it is later established that the Local Authority had not been informed of a change in circumstance, payments will be recovered by the Local Authority's Debt Recovery Team.

Would I receive a PTB for my child to attend two schools?

No. Transport assistance is only provided to one educational establishment. If you apply for a PTB, this will only be assessed to the main school that the child is on roll at.

How and when would I be paid my PTB?

The payments are paid over an 11 month period with no payments paid in August due to school closure over the holiday period. Payments are paid directly into your bank account on the 15th of each month or the previous working day where the 15th falls on a weekend or public holiday.

Payments are not back dated and no refunds are provided if your application for a PTB is processed within 6 weeks of receipt of the application.

My PTB request has been refused, can I appeal?

No. As PTBs are only available to children that are eligible for free school transport, there is no appeal as eligibility is not in dispute, but you can have the decision reviewed. If you have been refused a PTB because the cost of the PTB is more than the cost to the Local Authority of transporting your child, you can in the first instance ask for a review of the decision by a different officer in School Transport, providing any additional information or evidence that supports your request.

If you are still not satisfied by the response you receive, you can seek a final review from the AD Public Protection & Transport, who will make the final decision on how Central Bedfordshire Council will assist with transport. If you have been refused any assistance with transport because your child does not meet the necessary criteria, normal transport appeal arrangements will apply.

In exceptional circumstances where a PTB is cost prohibitive, it may be possible to award a mileage payment instead. This will be at the discretion of the council and will normally only be appropriate where it is agreed that the child must be transported by the parents/guardians.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Will the payments be taxed?

A. The budget is a payment made in relation to the child not the parent and so should not affect your tax situation. It is used to enable your child to get to and from school each day in a safe and legal way and should not be used for any other purpose. If you have concerns that it may impact on your tax situation, you will need to seek your own advice from a tax expert in relation to your personal circumstances

Q. If I have two/or more children with statements, all of whom are eligible for transport assistance, can I claim a PTB for each child?

A. You can claim for each child, but whilst the first child would receive 100% of the PTB, the second child would only be entitled to 50% of the PTB. Any additional children would not qualify for a PTB.

Q. My child travels in a taxi with other children. What would happen to that vehicle if one of the parents is granted a PTB?

A. The Local Authority would continue to provide you with the appropriate transport assistance but would review the arrangements to see if you or the other parents would prefer a PTB. The vehicle would only be withdrawn if all the children occupying the vehicle were granted a PTB and where the total cost of PTBs collectively was less than the cost of procuring the existing transport arrangements.

Q. Both myself and my child are happy with the current contractor and driver that transport my child to and from school. If I applied for the PTB, could my child continue to travel on the same vehicle?

A. No. If you applied for the PTB, you will be responsible for making your own arrangements for transporting your child to and from school. Even if you decide to refuse the PTB and stay with your current contractor, there is no guarantee that any contractor/driver or passenger assistant would remain the same whilst your child attends their school. If you decide to accept the PTB and then return to transport provided by the Local Authority, there is no guarantee that your child will be able to be placed back on to their previous transport.

Whilst you could use your PTB to make your own personal arrangements with the taxi contractor to take your child to and from school, your child would not be able to travel on the vehicle that the Local Authority has arranged.

You can use the PTB in any way you wish, for example:

- You or someone in your family can drive your child to and from school
- You can arrange with a friend or relative to walk your child to school.
- You can car share with other parents where their children are going to the same school as your child.

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- You or someone in your family can drive your child to and from school
- You can arrange with a friend or relative to walk your child to school.
- You can car share with other parents where their children are going to the same school as your child.
- You could provide a relative or friend with a bus pass in order to take your child to and from school.
- You could pay for childcare for a younger child in order for you to take your child to school.

Q. Do I need to collect any receipts for petrol etc?

A. No. Once the payments are made to you, you can use them any way you wish to in order for your child to get to and from school every day in a safe and legal way.

Q. What happens if my child is ill?

A. Your child's attendance record will be reviewed and the payments for any days that they are absent will be deducted from the following month's PTB payment.

If your child's attendance drops below an acceptable level without reason, you will be at risk of having your PTB withdrawn.

Q. My child is a boarder. Would this affect the size of my PTB?

A. Your child will be assessed in the same way as all other children and your PTB will initially be based on one of the three payment bands, however, the final payment will be offered on a pro rata basis to account for the actual number of journeys you are required to undertake.

Q. My child attends College, can I apply for a PTB?

A. If your child's needs mean that they are unable to access public transport, they can be considered for a PTB at the Local Authority's discretion.

Q. I have one child that receives transport because of their EHCP and another that is currently going through the assessment process. Would I receive a PTB for each child?

A. No. You can apply for a PTB for the child who already has an EHCP, but you would have to wait until your second child had received their EHCP before you could apply for that child. If you apply for a PTB for your second child, please be aware, that you would only receive 50% of the PTB if both children attended the same school.

Q. I am a foster carer for a child that receives transport, can I apply for a PTB?

A. If your foster child is in the care of Central Bedfordshire Council and meets the criteria to receive free home to school transport, then you can apply for a PTB.

If you are in receipt of an attendance allowance for the child you would not be eligible to receive a PTB.

If your foster child is in the care of another Local Authority i.e. outside of Central Bedfordshire Council, you will not be eligible to receive a PTB.

The corporate parent for the child may assist and should be contacted directly.

Q. My child has previously travelled in a taxi funded by the Local Authority. If I am granted a PTB, can I place my child on the same taxi now and again and pay the taxi company separately?

A. No. Once you have been granted a PTB, your child's seat on the vehicle will either be cancelled or given to another child.

You can ask the same taxi company to provide you with a vehicle and pay for them to take your child to and from school, however, this would be through a private arrangement between yourself and the taxi company.

Q. If I apply and am granted a PTB but find that at a later date it doesn't work with my child or my circumstances change, can I change back to the previous transport arrangement?

A. Yes. You must give us 28 days notice to stop the payments into your bank account and to rearrange transport for your child.

Please be aware, that this may not necessarily be the same taxi company or driver that your child may previously have had as no guarantee can be given that the arrangements would stay the same.