

## **Personal Transport Budgets**

### Information and Guidance for Parents, Guardians and Carers

#### **Introduction**

A Personal Transport Budget (PTB) is a sum of money paid to parents and carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who are eligible for school transport under the City of Edinburgh Council's Assisted Home to School Transport Policy.

A PTB lets families decide how their child or young person travels to and from school. Therefore, Parents, carers, guardians can make transport arrangements which suit their child's needs.

#### **Benefits of a Personal PTB**

A PTB allows you to have more choice and control. It can be spent how you like, as long as your child arrives on time and ready for the day via suitable and safe mode of travel.

The PTB offers flexibility over hired transport (taxis or minibuses) because:

- Your child may be more relaxed at school if they are dropped off or collected by someone close or familiar to them.
- If you have control and flexibility over transport to and from school or it could give you the opportunity to meet your child's teachers more often.
- A PTB can make it easier to enable your child to participate in commitments outside the core school or day, e.g. breakfast clubs, after school clubs and medical appointments.
- You can explore opportunities to co-ordinate with other parents with PTBs to arrange shared transport if that works better for you.
- It might be better for your child as they will not have to share transport with other children which can sometimes result in a longer journey time.
- You can use the PTB to support your child's personal development, for example to encourage independent travel such as public transport to enable them to access social and employment opportunities in the future.

## **How do I use a PTB to arrange transport for my child?**

The PTB gives you a payment that you can use to make your own transport arrangements this could include:

- Driving your child to school in your own vehicle
- Pooling budgets together with other parents to buy a transport service.
- Paying for wear and tear to your own vehicle
- Paying for another child's care while you escort your eligible child to school.
- Buying bicycles
- Paying for a bus pass for a family member/travel buddy
- Enabling you to choose a more sustainable mode of transport
- To assist with independent travelling
- Towards driving lessons through an accredited instructor

## **Applying for a PTB**

An application for a PTB can be made by:

- the parent, guardian, or carer on behalf of the child.
- a nominated person acting on behalf of the applicant if agreed by the applicant and that nominated person has capacity and will act in the applicant's best interests.

## **PTB Calculation**

The amount of PTB payment you will receive will be:

- A fixed payment of £500 per year
- Plus, a mileage rate of 45p x 4 trips per day

The amount will be determined by the number of days travelling per week and the distance from your child's home address to their school.

**The PTB example below is based on the home-school distance of 5 miles:**

- Fixed rate of £500
- 5 miles x 0.45p x 4 trips = £9
- £9 x 190 school days = £1710
- Fixed rate (500) plus mileage (1710) PTB = £2210
- PTB is paid in 12 monthly instalments.

For fairness and consistency all PTB distance calculations will be measured using the same measuring software that is used by the Council for assessing your child's eligibility for transport assistance.

### **Payment of the PTB**

The PTB will be paid into a nominated bank account in instalments every calendar month, in advance. In exceptional circumstances alternative payment arrangements may be made by agreement between you and the Council.

### **Change of circumstances**

You must notify the Council immediately in writing or by email about any change in your circumstances that may affect your eligibility to transport assistance and/or your PTB payment, for example:

- If you move address or change school or school site.
- Change of timetable that affects your child's school hours or days.

If you fail to notify the Council of any change to your circumstances, which the Council later decides would have had the effect of reducing or ending your child's entitlement to payments then the Council may terminate your PTB payments and will seek to recover any monies that you should not have received for the period in which you failed to notify.

If you are unsure about whether a change of circumstances will affect the PTB payments, you are advised to discuss this with the Council. If any change to your circumstances means that your child's eligibility to transport assistance is withdrawn, then the PTB payments will cease.

## **Change of payment**

The amount of PTB payment may also be reviewed, adjusted, suspended, or terminated if:

- Your child's attendance falls below 90% and has been recorded as an unauthorised absence.
- Your child regularly arrives late at school in the mornings.
- Your child arrives at school in an unfit state to learn.
- The travel arrangements that have been put in place for your child using the PTB are deemed to be unsuitable or unsafe.
- Your child accesses short breaks and stays away from the family home.
- There is a change to national legislation and/or the Council's policies.
- You have more than one child or other member of the same household each receiving a PTB and attending the same school or another school nearby.

## **Review of PTB arrangements**

Each PTB will be in place up to the end of the academic year after the arrangement has started. It will be reviewed on a regular basis, and you must reapply for a PTB each new academic year.

As part of the PTB review, the Council will contact your child's school to request their attendance records and ensure they have been able to fully access their learning opportunities. Once this information has been received and the transport review has been completed, any decision to adjust or withdraw the PTB will be given to you in writing.

## **Obligations**

If you or another trusted adult wishes to drive your child to school, you will be responsible for ensuring both the driver and the vehicle are road legal and all travel equipment such as car seats comply with the relevant safety standards.

If you use the PTB to employ someone yourself, then you will be responsible for complying with relevant rules regarding Tax and National Insurance, Employment Law, Insurance, Health and Safety or any other relevant rules or legislation in force at that time. The Council always recommends that you have a check conducted by the Disclosure Scotland on anyone that you are thinking of employing.

If you use the PTB to enter into contracts with organisations or individuals: you are responsible for complying with the terms and conditions of those contracts e.g. payment arrangements, notice of cancellation, etc.

The Council advises you to seek your own independent legal advice on the terms of the agreement and you must understand any obligations that are placed on you.

**You will:**

- Have control over how the payment is used that allows you to get your child to school.
- Accept responsibility for the decisions made regarding the use of the payments and understand what the consequences are for misuse.
- Use the PTB in accordance with this guidance.

**You cannot use your payment:**

- To buy or utilise a space on transport services from the City Council.
- For any purpose that does not enable you to get your child to or from school.
- For any activity that is illegal, unlawful, or unsafe.
- For other purposes that may bring the Council into disrepute.

**Terminating the PTB agreement**

You may terminate the agreement by providing 28 days written notice to the Council but note that the earliest date that this Agreement can be terminated is 31st October in any academic year. You must also inform the PTB Team. The Council will provide you with at least 28 days written notice if it decides to terminate the PTB agreement with you.

**For further information**

Please email ..... or alternatively visit our Local Offer Website.

## General Information

This guidance will be amended from time to time, as and when national legislation or council policy changes. If you want to confirm whether this guidance is the most up to date version, or if you require any further information on the guidance, please telephone: .....

Also contact the number above if you have any comments on this guidance or if you require information contained in this guidance in an alternative version, e.g. large print, Braille, tap.

## Frequently asked questions

### Q. Will the payments be taxed or have an impact on other benefits?

No. The payments are not taxed and will not impact on other benefits that you may receive. This is because the PTB is a payment made in relation to the child not the parent and is a grant that can be used in a variety of ways not just a 'mileage allowance.'

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

One PTB is payable per child or young person's main household. However, if two children attend two different schools the extra mileage between schools will be considered.

### 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?

No. By applying for the PTB, you will be responsible for making your own arrangements for transporting your child to and from school. 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 Council has arranged.

### Q. Do I need to collect any receipts for petrol or show how the PTB is being spent?

No. Once the payments are made to you, you can use them any way you wish to for your child to get to and from school every day. However, the Council retains the right to check payments are being spent correctly and lawfully.

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

If your foster child is in the care of The City of Edinburgh Council and meets the criteria to receive free home to school transport, then you can apply for a PTB. If your foster child is in the care of another Local Authority i.e. outside of Edinburgh, you will not be eligible to receive a PTB but may be eligible for a PTB from the other authority.

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

Yes. You must give us at least 28 days' notice (longer at peak periods) to stop the PTB payments and to allow the Council the opportunity to rearrange transport for your child. Please be aware, that this may not necessarily be the same taxi company or fleet vehicle that your child previously had as no guarantee can be given that the arrangements will stay the same.

**Q. Will the Council arrange short term transport cover for the occasions that I am unable to transport my child to school, for example if I am unwell?**

No. The Council will not provide any cover transport arrangements, and it will be your parental responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school.

You are advised to have a contingency plan in place using your PTB if for any reason you are unable to get your child to school yourself or by your chosen method.

**Q: How much will my Personal Travel Budget be?**

The amount of PTB you will receive is based on the distance between home and school, for the days that your child attends. This means each PTB will be tailored to the needs of each family. You can find out about how much you will receive.

**Q: Will I need to show how my budget is being spent?**

No. We want you to have flexibility and control and will only pick up any potential issues if your child's school tells us about a problem with their attendance or fitness to learn at school or college. We may reduce funding at times when your child has been absent without reason for an amount of time, in consultation with you and the school.

**Q: Will the Personal Travel Budget continue in future years?**

We are committed to providing the most appropriate travel assistance for families. As a child reaches secondary school age and above, they may also benefit from independent travel training, which we are developing as a service across the city.

Independent travel is an important life skill and can help children to access social and employment opportunities as they become young adults.

**Q: How does my Personal Travel Budget get Paid?**

If you decide to start a PTB. The City Council will then make the arrangements to transfer the PTB to your bank account in monthly payments. You will then be free to arrange and manage your child's travel arrangements in a way that best suits you, your child, and your family. If your circumstances change, for example your family moves to a new house, the PTB may need to be re-calculated.