

Personal Transport Budgets



An Information Guide for Parents
www.kent.gov.uk

Contents page

What is a Personal Transport Budget? **3**

Who can be considered for a PTB? **3**

How do I apply?..... **3**

How much would I expect to receive? **4**

Would I receive the PTB until my child finishes at the school they attend? **4**

What should I do if my circumstances change? **4**

Would I receive a PTB for my child to attend two schools? **5**

How and when would I be paid my PTB? **5**

My PTB request has been refused, can I appeal?..... **5 - 6**

Frequently Asked Questions..... **7 - 8**

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, is picked up and dropped off 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 hired vehicle or the specific journey you may use when taking your child to school.

Where parents use a PTB to make their own arrangements to get their child to school, they often find that it results in their child being more relaxed and ready to learn compared to when they use transport organised by KCC. It also provides parents with a regular link to their child's school and allows for more frequent opportunities to discuss their child's progress.

Who can be considered for a PTB?

A PTB is available to children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) 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.kent.gov.uk/schooltransport

Before granting a PTB, the Local Authority will investigate whether there is any transport currently in place that your child could be placed onto at a lower cost than providing you with a PTB.

While your child's specific needs will be considered when they are assessed for free school transport eligibility and when identifying their most appropriate form of transport, PTB assessments are based solely on whether or not they are cost effective for the Local Authority.

If it is not cost effective for the Local Authority to provide you with a PTB, it will not be granted even if it is your preferred method of receiving transport assistance.

Students that are eligible for free school transport but for whom a PTB is not cost effective will be allocated to the most appropriate alternative form of transport assistance instead.

How do I apply?

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

Alternatively, you can indicate your preference for a PTB by ticking the relevant box on your T1 school transport application, which can be found at www.kent.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 KCC 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 Kent County Council's own measuring software is used to determine this. For fairness and consistency, the same software is used for all applications.

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

Band	Home to school distance	Annual budget
1	Less than 5 miles	£2,000
2	Between 5 – 10 miles	£3,000
3	Over 10 miles	£5,000

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, or starts during the school year, KCC will make your PTB payment on a pro rata basis. PTB payments will also not be made for days where your child is not required to attend school/college (eg study leave or other authorised absence from school/college premises). This means you may receive less than the total amount outlined above.

KCC will send you a schedule each year that will detail what your expected monthly payments will be, based on 100% attendance (taking into account your child's timetable). Parents must confirm within 14 days if this schedule is incorrect. Failure to do so may mean that it is not possible to remedy underpayments at a later date.

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?

Once a PTB has been granted, you are not guaranteed to receive it until your child leaves their current school. KCC 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 regularly accessing 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.

What should I do if my circumstances change?

If your child moves home or changes school, you must ensure that you let KCC know as soon as possible, but no later than 28 days before the change is due to take place. Failure to notify KCC of such changes under the terms of the agreement would constitute fraud and could lead to legal proceedings at a later date to recover any undue payments. On notification of a change in circumstances your child's eligibility to receive a PTB would then be reassessed. You are not guaranteed to continue to receive a PTB because one was previously provided. The PTB assessment will be made on the basis of your child's current circumstances and what alternative transport is available at the time. 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 and where appropriate, through the courts.

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?

PTB payments are made in 11 monthly instalments. No payment will be made in July to allow the Council sufficient time to confirm that a reduction is not required in the final monthly instalment to account for low attendance. The final payment will be made in August to account for transport that parents have provided in July of that school year. Parents are advised to budget throughout the year to ensure they have sufficient funds to cover the extended gap before this final payment. 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 will be calculated from the date that the parental agreement form is returned.

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, however, you can have the decision reviewed.

PTBs cannot be provided until we have established whether or not your child is eligible for free school transport. When applying for free school transport, parents are advised to provide whatever information they feel best evidences their child's particular need. This may be their child's Education Health and Care Plan, a report from their child's consultant or GP that references how their needs impact their ability to travel to school or any other information that the parent thinks would assist in providing the most appropriate transport arrangements for their child. KCC will use this information to assess your child's eligibility for free school transport and decide what the most appropriate form of transport is. KCC will then use the cost of this transport to assess whether a PTB can be provided.

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 Transport Eligibility Officer. Requests should be made by emailing **PersonalTransportBudgets@kent.gov.uk**. This review will establish whether the most appropriate form of transport has been offered to your child, based on the evidence that you provided when applying and ensure no mistakes were made when deciding whether a PTB would be cost effective. If parents neglected to include any of the information detailed above when initially applying, they can provide it at this stage to allow Transport Eligibility Officers to ensure that the most appropriate alternative transport is being offered. Parents will receive a response to their Transport Eligibility Officer review within 28 days. Where parents present additional information for consideration during their Transport Eligibility Officers review, an outcome will be provided within 28 days of any new information being received by the Transport Eligibility Team.

If the Transport Eligibility Officer review highlights that parents received an incorrect PTB assessment, a PTB will be provided and payments will be back-dated to the initial PTB assessment decision date or the date six weeks after the initial application was received, whichever is earlier. If

the review overturns the decision as a result of additional information that the parent did not make available when first applying, a PTB will be provided and payments will start from the date the parental agreement is returned. Where the review is completed after the 28 day limit, payments will be calculated from 28 days after any new information was received by the Transport Eligibility Team.

If you are still not satisfied by the response you receive following the Transport Eligibility Officer review, you can seek a review from the Head of Fair Access, who will make the final decision on how KCC will assist with transport. Requests for a review by the Head of Fair Access should be made by emailing **PersonalTransportBudgets@kent.gov.uk**.

At this stage, parents need to evidence what exceptional circumstances they feel should be considered to allow additional resources to be expended to provide their child with a PTB where suitable alternative transport has already been made available. Exceptional circumstances could relate to scenarios where it can be shown that a child cannot travel without the direct supervision of their parent/carer. Evidence could include any of the examples detailed above, anecdotal evidence supported by a medical professional or child's school or anything else a parent believes evidences their child's additional need. The Head of Fair Access will also consider whether the initial PTB assessment and Transport Eligibility Officer reviews were correct. Parents will receive a response to their Head of Fair Access review within 28 days. Where parents present additional information for consideration during their Head of Fair Access review, an outcome will be provided within 28 days of any new information being received by the Transport Eligibility Team.

If the Head of Fair Access review highlights that parents received an incorrect initial PTB assessment, a PTB will be provided and payments will be back-dated to the initial PTB assessment decision date or the date six weeks after the initial application was received, whichever is earlier. If the Head of Fair Access review highlights that the Transport Eligibility Officer review was incorrect, a PTB will be provided and payments will start from the Transport Eligibility Officer review decision date or the date 28 days after the last parental email that provided new information for consideration during the Transport Eligibility Officer review, whichever is earlier. If the Head of Fair Access review overturns the decision as a result of additional information that highlights exceptional circumstances, a PTB will be provided and payments will start from the date the parental agreement is returned.

Where the review is completed after the 28 day limit, payments will be calculated 28 days after any new information was received by the Transport Eligibility Team. Where a PTB continues to be cost prohibitive, but the family make a strong case for support, the Head of Fair Access has the discretion to award a mileage payment instead, where this is deemed suitable.

Where a Transport Eligibility Officer review or Head of Fair Access review does not result in your PTB assessment being overturned, parents cannot request refunds for their own transport costs as alternative transport would have been made available by KCC for your child's use.

If you have been refused any assistance with transport because your child does not meet the necessary criteria, normal transport appeal arrangements will apply. These appeal processes are separate to any request for a PTB, so could result in a considerable delays. Parents are responsible for any alternative transport arrangements that are required during this time.

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 an EHCP, all of whom are eligible for transport assistance, can I claim a PTB for each child?

A. Where more than one child is eligible for a PTB, we will pay the full PTB for your first child and 50% for the second child. 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 for the duration that 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 arrangement.

You could use your PTB to make your own personal arrangements with the taxi contractor to take your child to and from school, however, your child would not be able to travel on the vehicle that the Local Authority has commissioned for home to school transport.

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.
- 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.

For example, someone who transports their own child on a weekly basis would receive a greater proportion of the budget compared to someone who transports their child once a term.

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

A. Ordinarily, KCC will support post 16 learners with a 16+ Travel Card and therefore a PTB would not be provided. However, 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 for the second child. Any additional children would not qualify for a PTB.

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

A. If your foster child has an EHCP, is in the care of Kent County 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 Kent including Medway, you will not be eligible to receive a PTB.

The corporate parent for the child may assist with any transport needs and carers should contact the placing LA directly.

Q. Can I use my PTB to purchase a Young Person's Travel Pass or 16+ Travel Card for my child?

A. No. Both the Young Person's Travel Pass (YPTP) and 16+ Travel Card are heavily subsidised by KCC and made available to parents at a significantly reduced price. KCC will monitor YPTP and 16+ Travel Card applications and where an application is received for a child in receipt of a PTB, their PTB may be withdrawn. Parents will be expected to return any PTB payments that they have received for the school year in which they have also purchased a YPTP or 16+ Travel Card.

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 in the interim.