

## Travel Allowance

### **5 DSA travel allowance**

DSA travel allowance may be used to pay the reasonable additional costs of travel to and from the HEP which are incurred because of a disability.

#### **5.1 Attending the HEP**

DSA travel support is calculated as the excess between public transport costs and the mode of travel the student is required to use because of their disability. For example, if a student needs to travel by taxi rather than by public transport because of their disability, then the DSA will cover the additional expenditure that represents.

Some students may be required, as a result of a disability, to use a private car to travel to and from their HEP. In this instance, the amount of travel support should be any excess between public transport costs and the cost of the same journey by car. This is set at 24p per mile. Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the HEP as a reasonable adjustment.

#### **5.2 Notes for Study Needs Assessors**

Each recommendation from a needs assessor for additional travel costs to be funded from DSA will be considered in line with the Regulations, which set out that the purpose of DSA is to assist with the additional expenditure which a student is obliged to incur in connection with their attendance on or undertaking of a designated course by reason of their disability. The recommendation must be supported by specific medical evidence demonstrating a **clear link** between the student's disability and the travel need.

The DSA study needs assessor will need to be satisfied that the travel expenditure is related to the student's study and arises in each case solely by reason of a disability to which the student is subject.

A disabled student may still qualify for Travel Grant (regulations 48 - 55) in the same way as any other student (see the 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' guidance).

DSA travel support is not available to enable the student to attend appointments, or for other travel needs that are personal needs, for example hospital appointments or travel to their home address where this is different from their term time address. This is the case irrespective of whether the travel is required because the HEP is not in the locality of the appointment or the student's home address.

Needs Assessors should discuss with students whether they are in receipt of any form of support towards travel costs from other government agencies or their local authority. This information will affect the assessment of travel cost assistance the student is awarded. Receipt of another means of support does not preclude a

student from receiving DSA. However, it informs the decision as to what additional help the student might require. For example, if a student has a Motability car then DSA travel support will not be provided other than in exceptional circumstances.

### **5.3 Reasonable commute**

We would generally expect a reasonable commute to be up to 75 minutes travelling time between the student's term-time address and the HEP<sup>1</sup>. The 75-minute travelling time would be the time taken for the complete journey door to door by public transport. DSA may not fund additional taxi expenditure for journeys longer than this unless in exceptional circumstances.

DSA travel support may not fund journeys that are a reasonable walking distance, which for the purpose of this guidance is 3 miles<sup>2</sup> unless:

- the student's medical evidence confirms that as a result of their disability they are unable to walk that distance
- there is no safe walking route between the student's home and their HEP (taking into account the availability of footpaths, pavements, etc.)

#### **5.3.1 Multiple daily journeys**

Where a student's condition may mean that they need to rest during the day or in between lectures, the HEP should make a reasonable adjustment where possible by providing the student with a suitable place to rest or by reviewing the student's timetable requirements. DSA travel support may not be used for more than one return journey / two single journeys per day. Any additional daily journeys will not generally be funded by DSA. Students who require additional journeys for valid reasons may be reviewed on a case by case basis.

### **5.4 Public transport availability**

If there is no public transport route available between the student's term time address and their HEP (either at all, or at the times when they would need to travel to the HEP), then DSA may not fund mileage costs for the student because any student would need to drive to the HEP in these circumstances and so there is no

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<sup>1</sup> This is in line with DfE's statutory guidance to local authorities on post-16 transport and travel support to education and training, which sets out that a child of secondary school age or a young person of sixth form age may reasonably be expected to travel up to 75 minutes each way to access learning. [Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672212/Post-16_transport_and_travel_support_to_education_and_training.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> This is in line with the statutory walking distance between home and school for a child aged eight years or over, which is 3 miles.

additional disability-related cost associated with the journey. DSA taxi expenditure may be considered in these circumstances only if the student is unable to drive as a result of their disability, as specified in their medical evidence. The reasonable commute time of 75 minutes still applies in these circumstances.

#### **5.4.1 Public Transport Costs**

Public transport costs are deductible from all DSA travel allowance agreements, though there may occasionally be exceptions to this rule, such as where there is no available public transport route (see 5.9.1) or the route is shorter than the reasonable walking distance of 3 miles.

For journeys under 3 miles, public transport costs will not be deducted as this is deemed to be a reasonable walking distance.

If multiple public transport options are available for a journey, considering both distance and cost, the most cost-effective option should be chosen that is less than the reasonable commuting distance of 75 minutes door to door.

#### **5.4.2 Parking costs**

DSA travel support is not generally available to cover parking charges. Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the HEP as a reasonable adjustment.

#### **5.4.3 Toll charges / other driving charges**

Where a student has been agreed DSA-funded taxi travel, any toll charges or other driving costs such as ULEZ charges should be incorporated into the overall journey cost by the taxi provider (and this should be made clear on the quote / invoice). Where a student is using a private car, these charges may be reimbursed to the student. In both cases DSA will fund these charges only if there is no suitable alternative charge-free route.

#### **5.4.4 DSA support for journeys by public transport**

There may be circumstances in which DSA travel support can be agreed for journeys by public transport. For example, if a student needs to travel by train instead of by bus so that they can access toilet facilities during the journey, DSA may fund the difference between the cost of the train ticket and the cost of the bus ticket for the equivalent journey, where the train ticket is more expensive. This will only be considered if the comparator public transport journey is within the reasonable commuting time of 75 minutes.

## **5.5 Motability Cars**

Generally, where the student has opted to use a mobility element of their DLA or PIP to lease a Motability car, they will be expected to use that car to attend their HEP and travel costs will be calculated using the DSA mileage allowance of 24p per mile, deducting any public transport costs and taking into account the public transport availability guidance (see 5.9.1).

As a result, DSA travel support is not normally available to students who lease a Motability car. This also applies in circumstances where someone other than the student has leased the Motability car on behalf of the student, e.g. a parent or carer, and they are unable to drive the student to and from the HEP, as this would be a duplication of public funding.

If there are exceptional circumstances (for example if a student is temporarily unable to drive their Motability car due to a flare-up of their condition), SLC will consider whether DSA travel funding may be made available to the student during this period.

## **5.6 Attending a placement**

The site of a student's placement will be treated as being 'the HEP' for the purposes of journeying to and from the site at the start and end of the day. HEPs and the provider of the placement should consider additional travel needs, for example, off-site meetings during the day, as part of their reasonable adjustments.

Recommendations for placements must take into account the guidance set out above around reasonable walking distance and reasonable commuting time; however, SLC will consider whether exceptions can be made to this on a case by case basis for short-term placements (e.g. work placements, teaching placements or hospital placements, placements abroad)

### **5.6.1 Travel as part of a work placement**

The guidance on multiple journeys also applies to placements; DSA travel support may not be used for more than one return journey / two single journeys per day.

If a student is expected to attend more than one placement site on one day, we would expect the student's travel needs to be met by their placement provider, with support from Access to Work if appropriate and the student is eligible.

Any additional disability-related travel costs for such journeys will therefore not generally be eligible for DSA funding.

## **5.7 Attending a field trip**

The site of a student's field trip will be treated the same as being 'the HEP' for the purposes of journeying to and from the site at the start and end of the day. The needs assessor should confirm whether the HEP is organising transport for the trip (e.g. a minibus), and if so whether the form of transport provided will meet the student's needs. The same ruling also applies to students participating in field work abroad.

## **5.8 Occasional Travel**

DSA study needs assessors should always look to consider first whether public transport / walking / cycling / driving can be managed some or all of the time and whether occasional travel support could meet the needs of the student rather than recommending and having a taxi account set up by SLC. As a general rule, for the purposes of this guidance 'occasional' means up to 15 return journeys or up to 30 single journeys per academic year. Any decision made to agree additional journeys should be treated with discretion. Should the student be unable to pay upfront for occasional journeys, then a taxi account should be considered.

### **5.8.1. Chronic conditions**

Chronic conditions can fluctuate and it is understandable that DSA funded taxis may be required during a 'flare-up' or while adapting to a new medication, for example.

In these circumstances, we would not expect needs assessors to recommend a taxi account for every journey that the student makes to their HEP. Occasional taxi travel may be more suitable in these circumstances.

## **5.9 Taxi firm accounts**

DSA travel support will only be paid for taxi fares with appropriately licensed taxi providers. SLC will usually set up an account with the taxi firm that has been agreed in the Needs Assessment Report and payments will be made direct to the company, on receipt of an invoice. In some cases, for example where occasional journeys have been agreed (see section 5.7 below), the student may pay the taxi provider directly and claim reimbursement from SLC, providing evidence of the journey through a valid itemised company receipt. The student must still use an appropriately licensed taxi provider in these circumstances.

The following are prohibited in all circumstances:

- DSA travel support for taxi fares is not available to any company, partnership or other organisation that is owned or controlled by the student being supported, or in which the student has a financial interest, personal investment or similar.

- Students are not permitted to use DSA funded support with taxi firms involving friends, family members or work colleagues, due to the potential conflict of interest and the difficulty in maintaining professional boundaries.

### **5.9.1 Journeys to a different 'home' address.**

DSA taxi travel allowance may not be used to travel to another 'home' address such as a family member or partner / friend's address, other than in exceptional circumstances. The DSA taxi allowance can only be used for journeys from the student's current term time address to the HEP.

### **5.9.2 Ad hoc journeys**

Students may need to use a taxi on an ad hoc basis with a licensed company that they do not hold an account with, for example where their nominated taxi supplier has no availability. These will be reimbursed on receipt of a valid itemised company receipt.

### **5.10 Examples**

Some examples of where a recommendation for DSA-funded additional accommodation costs may and may not be funded are set out below. Please note that these are illustrative and that each case will be considered on its own facts.

#### **Example 1**

Student A has been diagnosed with IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). They are attending a FT UG course. The medical evidence confirms that the student needs to be close to toilet facilities during flare-ups and that these flare-ups tend to occur once or twice a month and last a day or two. The student's usual journey to the HEP takes 30 minutes on a bus with no public toilets available on the bus route, but a taxi journey would take 10 minutes and the student would have the option of diverting to a toilet on the way.

In this example, DSA may fund occasional taxi travel for the times when the student is experiencing a 'flare up' of their condition and needs to travel to and from their HEP. The needs assessor should calculate the likely number of journeys required based on the medical evidence and the number of days a week the student needs to attend the HEP and include this in the recommendation.

#### **Example 2**

Student B has been diagnosed with Epilepsy and is attending a FT UG course. The medical evidence confirms that the student's condition is controlled with medication but does not indicate any specific needs with respect to their travel. The student has asked if DSA can fund taxi travel to and from the HEP because they are concerned that they might have a seizure on public transport.

In this example, DSA may not fund taxi travel. There is no indication in the medical evidence that travelling on public transport will trigger a seizure and so taxi travel would not constitute a disability-related need.

### **Example 3**

Student C has been diagnosed with long-term depression and is studying a PT PG course. The medical evidence confirms that the student suffers from insomnia as a symptom of their condition. The student explains that they lack the motivation to get up and ready in time to catch the bus and this affects their attendance, but they feel a taxi would ensure they arrive on time. The journey to the HEP is a 20-minute walk plus a 25-minute bus journey but only a 20-minute taxi journey.

In this example, DSA may not fund taxi travel for this student as there is no indication in the medical evidence that the student has specific needs with respect to travel.

### **Example 4**

Student D has been diagnosed with Diabetes Type 1 and is attending an UG FT.

The medical evidence confirms that their condition is well controlled by insulin but that the student can occasionally experience fatigue. The student has decided to attend a HEP in another city. The commute takes just over 90 minutes by public transport. The journey by taxi is around 50 minutes, and the student has asked for DSA to fund taxi journeys to and from the HEP every day that they attend to ensure that they arrive there well rested and ready to start the day.

In this example, DSA may not fund taxi travel because the equivalent journey by public transport would take over 90 minutes each way, which we would not consider to be a reasonable commute.

### **Example 5**

Student E has been diagnosed with anxiety and they are studying an UG FT degree. The medical evidence does not indicate any specific needs with respect to travelling / public transport. The journey to the HEP is over 5 miles away which is further than the reasonable walking distance and there are regular buses. The student has indicated that they feel anxious on buses and particularly worry about the bus not being on time and being late for university.

In this example, DSA may not fund taxi travel. Although the student's journey to the HEP is further than the 3-mile reasonable walking distance, the medical evidence does not give any indication that the student has specific needs in relation to travel / public transport.

### **Example 6**

Student F has been diagnosed with CFS and Arthritis and are studying a FT UG course. The medical evidence confirms that the student's condition can be painful and tiring, that they need to take regular rests during the day, and that they are

unable to walk for more than a few minutes at a time. The HEP is less than two miles away from Student F's home but Student F cannot manage this most of the time due to their disability.

In this example, DSA may fund taxi travel. Although the HEP is within a reasonable walking distance, the student's condition prevents them from walking for even a short time.

### **Example 7**

Student G has been diagnosed with autism and will be attending a FT PG course. The student's HEP is between 2 and 3 miles away. The student feels anxious when using buses and trains due to being in an enclosed space around strangers. The student's medical evidence states that the student has experienced panic attacks as a result of their condition on public transport due to an incident in the past and it is a substantial issue for them.

In this example DSA may fund taxi travel if the distance from the student's address to the HEP was over 3 miles; however, the distance is deemed to be a walkable distance of under 3 miles so the student would be expected to make their own way to the HEP, assuming they can walk this distance safely.

### **Example 8**

Student H is a manual wheelchair user and lives 2.5 miles from their HEP. Their medical evidence confirms that they are unable to manoeuvre their wheelchair for more than half a mile or so due to the fatigue this induces. Although there is a bus route to the HEP from near their home, they are unable to navigate the journey to the bus stop through their busy town due to the pavement quality and placement of the bus stop at the top of a steep hill beside a busy road. There are no other public transport options available to the student.

In this example, DSA may fund taxi travel. The student is unable to access public transportation as they cannot make their way to the bus stop. This is supported by the student's medical evidence.