*****Hertfordshire Travel Training***

***A guide for parents***

***What is Travel Training?***

Travelling independently is an important part of a young person’s development. Travel Training gives children and young people with Special Educational needs the skills and confidence to travel independently on public transport. For the student, it provides a life changing opportunity for individual growth and idependence, and for the parent, peace of mind, knowing that their child is safe when travelling on their own. Travel Training is done on a one to one basis with an experienced Travel Trainer and provides the young person with all the information, support and encouragement they need to travel independently and safely. We realise that each student is completely different, so we cater our approach to cater to the needs of each student. The programme focuses on the journey from home to college and once the programme is completed, students can apply the skills to make alternative journeys of their choice. Travel Training is free of charge and will not affect any benefits that you may receive.

***What is the Criteria?***

In order for a student to be eligible for Travel Training, they must:

* Be aged 16-18 (though we are currently expanding the programme to engage with school age students)
* Have a current Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
* Be in receipt of transport from Hertfordshire County Council
* Be a Hertfordshire resident
* Have already completed the Travel Training programme but need to learn a new route in relation to a change in their college course

***How does this affect my child’s eligibility with regards to home to school transport?***

The Travel Training programme is available for students who receive transport support to the nearest suitable school as named on their EHCP. Once successfully trained, the students will be considered as capable of independent travel to their place of education, meaning that home to school transport will no longer be required and therefore withdrawn. This is a really positive development for students and their first step on their journey of independence.

***What are the benefits?***

Lots of young people are now travelling independently across Hertfordshire after taking part in the programme. Feedback from parents has told us that their children…….

* Feel more confident and independent
* Can go out a lot more with their friends
* Do not have to rely on specialist transport – or their parents/carers
* Have access to a greater range of college courses
* Have a better chance of finding and maintaining employment
* Do better at school
* Feel safer in the community

***What does the training cover?***

* Road safety (including crossing and traffic awareness)
* Confidence and safety awareness of using transport
* Journey planning (including learning routes and reading timetables)
* What to do if something goes wrong (who to ask for help and who they can contact)
* Stranger awareness
* Personal safety
* Using money (buying tickets)

***How does the programme work?***

***The referral and home visit……***

* Once the referral has been received by the Travel Trainer, they will get some background information from the tutor at the college and then contact the parent/carer to arrange a home visit.
* During this meeting, the Travel Trainer will explain the programme, answer any questions or queries that you or your son/daughter may have and discuss possible routes. They will also get some further information on the needs of the student.
* There will be a consent form to complete, as the training cannot commence without parental permission and a suitable date will be agreed for training to start.
* The Travel Trainer will plan a viable route and complete a risk assessment in relation to the journey and the student

***Training begins………..***

* The Travel Trainer will begin by meeting with the student informally to get to know them and carry out an initial assessment to identify areas they may be confident in, or in need of support with. They will then complete the proposed route together.
* The Trainer will then continue to meet with the student, normally on a weekly basis, during a time that fits in with their college timetable.
* Training will begin at more quiet times of the day in order to get students used to the journey and the transport without the distraction of crowds and a busy, noisy environment.
* Students are taught all of the skills they will need to travel independently; this includes techniques such as identifying landmarks or buildings which will help them recognise where they will need to get off the bus.
* Travel Trainers will work at the students own pace, so there is no set time for the programme to be completed, though they will ensure that there is constant progress, and a review involving parents and the college if necessary.
* Throughout the programme, Travel Trainers will keep in regular contact with parents/carers to keep them updated on the student’s progress and answer any queries they may have.

***As student’s progress…….***

* All of the student’s progress is evidenced, with Travel Trainers signing off their progress on a Record of Achievement along the way.
* As students develop their independent travel skills, support is gradually reduced and journeys are completed during peak times to get students used to the real life situations they will face when travelling independently.
* From fully supporting the student for the entirety of their journey at the beginning of the programme, they may reduce support by sitting on a different part of the bus or just meeting with them at the beginning and end of the journey.

***Completing the programme……..***

* A student is signed off once the Travel Trainer is happy and has witnessed (on multiple occasions) the student complete all aspects competently without support.
* Once the programme is completed, the student will receive a certificate of achievement which outlines their achievements and the skills they have developed.
* Parents and students will then have the opportunity to give us feedback about their experience of the Travel Training programme.
* Students can stay in touch with the Travel Trainers once the programme is complete, should they need extra support in the future.

***What part can the parent/carer play?***

* A mobile phone is an essential part of the Travel Training programme as it allows students to contact Travel Trainers if they need support or feel vulnerable while out in the community. If your son/daughter does not currently have a mobile phone it may be worth buying them an inexpensive, pay as you go or letting them have access to a family member’s phone while they are out travel training.
* In preparation for the student becoming an independent traveller, it is essential that the student either has, or has applied for a bus pass. Travel Trainers have copies of the application form so feel free to ask them if you need support with this process.
* If yours or your son/daughter circumstances change, it is really important that you let us know at the earliest opportunity so that we can update our records and ensure that we can continue delivering the best and most supportive service. This includes a change to the student’s college timetable or a change of family address or contact details.
* Our experience has shown that any additional Travel Training experience that the family can provide to supplement the work of the Travel Training programme can be of great benefit to the student. Even if it is not the same journey that is being practised with the Travel Trainer, a bus trip at the weekend to the shops or to see a friend or family member can really help students to get used to the public transport environment and help boost their confidence and ability through repeated practice. Travel Trainers are happy to share any tips or offer advice if this is something that you would like to do with your son/daughter.