



Parental Guide to Travel Training

It's a Journey...

Independence at the push of a button



But together we can help
them get there!



Manchester
Travel Training
Partnership

Travel Training



What is it?

Travel training is about young disabled people learning the skills necessary to travel independently on public transport.

Why do it?

Being able to travel independently makes young people less dependent on both their parents and the Local Authority to transport them around. Crucially it builds confidence and self esteem.

It can potentially open up new areas of social, education and employment opportunities. And it makes them a more visible part of their community, which is good for both them and society.

Why this Guide?

This guide has been produced to enable you to understand the travel training process and thereby assist your young person's progress whilst they undertake travel training.

What follows is how we travel train and the intention is this information will help you to be a part of the success in your young person's independence.

By following the different stages through you can become aware of the main issues involved and help your young person at each stage towards their independence.

1. Route

The first stage of travel training is to plan the route. It is good to involve the young person in this so they can begin to pick up the skills of planning as well as voicing their opinions.

b) Look at the alternatives

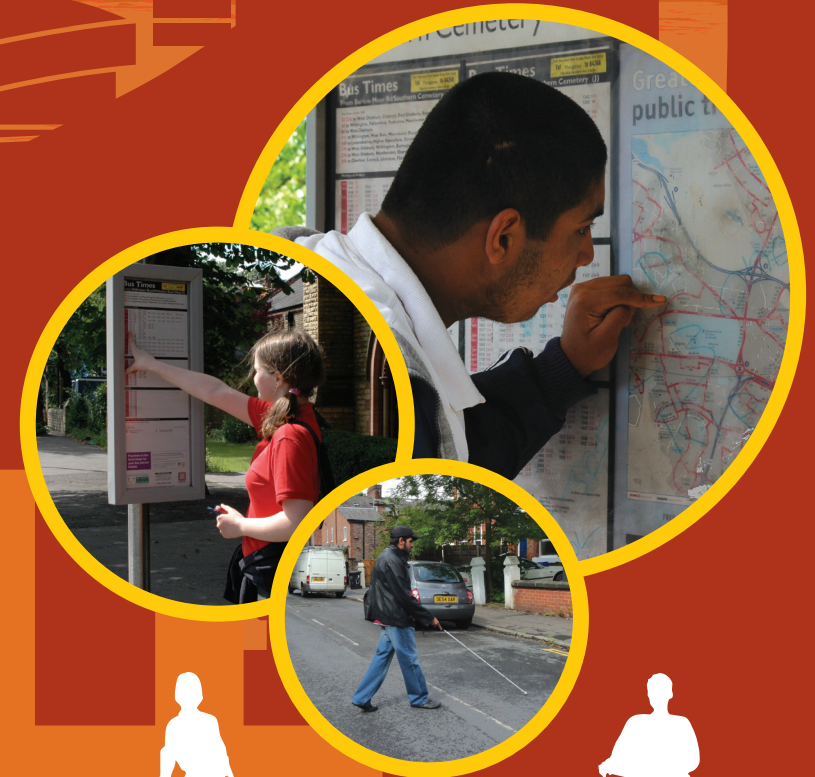
Most routes have a variety of ways of completing the journey and all the different options have their advantages and pit falls.

a) What route?

We begin with the route to school or educational establishment but once this has been mastered the young person may want to choose another well worn route that would be useful for them socially.

You can check for different ways on TfGM's (Transport for Greater Manchester) web site.

Their journey planner will give you some of the alternatives, but this is not exhaustive and you may know of routes not suggested.



c) Chose a Route

When choosing a route these are some the things we consider:

Factors	Issues	Decisions
Duration	This is affected by the time of day the journey is being made.	Usually you are looking for the shortest journey time but other factors also can be considered.
Complex	Some routes involve changing service.	Check how difficult the changeover is, where it is and what the waiting time is between services.
Walking	Some journeys involve long walking parts.	This depends on the young person how acceptable this is.
Mode	The choice is usually bus, tram or train.	The ease of use and the journey time of the different forms vary for different young people and the route they are taking.
Regularity	The transport can be infrequent and varied at rush hour.	It is best to look for regular services as they provide the best back up if one fails to turn up.
Level of use	This can vary at different times.	How well does the young person cope with a crowded service and how assertive can they be.

We try the route out with your young person and are prepared to change it if it doesn't suit them, is unreliable or has unforeseen problems. It is important to try the route in real time i.e. when the young person is going to be travelling it because the traffic conditions are very diverse at different times of the day.

When we have chosen a route we then importantly break the route down into sections and work out landmarks both for walking and transport sections of it.

Sometimes we take photos of these landmarks to help with recognition or to make up a visual journey plan.

It is important to remember that the route goes both ways and will look very different on the return!



2. Risk

Yes travel training does unfortunately involve risk!

When we have chosen a route we do what we call a risk assessment. This is checking the route for potential hazards and dangers and then looking for ways to minimise these so that the young person isn't taking any unnecessary risks.

These will vary for each student. It depends on the young person's experience and disability what areas will be a risk for them and what the best ways around these are.

Remember we can't eliminate all risk, but try to keep them to a minimum.

Here are some of the things we look out for and some solutions.

Risk	Solutions
Busy roads with fast moving traffic and multiple lanes, blind crossings and difficult junctions with multiple exits.	Check for crossings, islands or alternative walking routes that avoid busy crossings.
Isolated / busy multiple use bus stops	Depending on the young person either of these could be an issue so choosing a different stop may be the option.
Complex route that involves changing type of transport and using a busy interchange	Is there a route that avoids the interchange or even a direct bus but with a longer walk.
Over crowded transport, lack of seating and possibility of having to wait for next service if full.	Extra work on coping in crowds and assertiveness maybe needed. A change of time may avoid busy services or even a different company if it is a bus service.
Obstructions (parked cars, bins, alteration works) and uneven or faulty pavement surfaces.	In this case it may be necessary to alter the route slightly to avoid regular obstructions or bad pavements. In the long term a complaint to the council may improve things.
Poor light and adverse weather (these can both be seasonal)	Make sure the bus stop has a shelter. Encourage good wet weather clothing and wearing bright reflective clothes to be seen.
Trouble spots for antisocial behaviour	Look to avoid these even if it means a longer walk or extra bus journey.

3. Training

Once the young person and route have been assessed then the training can start.

The key to the training is not to take the lead. Once they have completed the journey a couple of times and know the basics it is time to start letting them lead the way. The trainer is always in the background at this stage but ready to step in when needed.

This can be harder than it sounds. We as adults are used to making decisions and it can be tough sitting back and letting the young person make them - however long they take!

Part of this means not sitting next to them on the transport and not providing all the immediate solutions to problems, but letting them have a go at finding ways out.

There are 7 basic areas we watch out for in travel training:

Area	What to Look for
Preparation	<p>Often parents will lead this for their young person. However, if the young person can learn the skills themselves this will add to their independence and self esteem.</p> <p>This includes: Having what they need for the journey such as their pass or money, checking the weather and deciding on appropriate clothes and checking the time to leave.</p> <p>Also being aware of time, both knowing what it is at the moment but also awareness of the passage of time?</p>
Road Safety	<p>The basic skills are: Choosing a safe place to cross, listening and watching for traffic, and deciding when to cross. (The basic Green Cross Code)</p> <p>These skills require an understanding of roads and traffic speed, distance and flow of traffic. Also useful is a grasp of the behaviour and expectations of drivers.</p> <p>In addition they need awareness of different types of crossings and how they work.</p>
Route	<p>Do they know the route to their stop and from their stop at the other end?</p> <p>Are there any parts that they get confused with?</p>

Bus / tram stop or train station	<p>Do they recognise which stop is theirs and this may include platform or road side?</p> <p>Do they know which way to look out for the transport and can they recognise the correct bus or tram stop?</p> <p>Can they read timetables and information boards?</p> <p>Do they know how to stop the transport if they need to and how to board?</p>
Boarding the transport	<p>This varies according to what means they are using but often includes: Coping with a queue and letting others get off, having a pass ready to show or money to buy a ticket, interacting with the driver and finding a seat.</p> <p>The final one can be quite challenging as it involves choice and this can be hard for some. Do you stand or sit, go upstairs or down, find an empty seat or sit next to someone?</p>
During the journey	<p>How do they occupy themselves on the ride?</p> <p>Are they focused to look out for landmarks?</p> <p>Can they be easily distracted?</p>
Disembark	<p>Can they recognise their landmark for getting off?</p> <p>Do they know how to stop the transport if needed and do they give enough time to get off.</p> <p>Do they know the direction to the destination?</p>

The frequency of the training will be dependent on a number of matters but foremost will be based on the young person's ability to learn the skills. Some young people train best on a slow programme of once or twice a week whilst others retain information better through a full time training programme.

The training then becomes a repetition of the route until the young person begins to feel more confident about their ability to manage the route on their own.

The travel trainer will be constantly reviewing and revising both the training and the route to make sure both fit the young person. The trainer is also aware of their role to avoid the young person becoming dependent on them, stepping back as soon as possible.

Breaking the journey down into manageable chunks can help this process of the young person taking charge of decision making.



The student needs to use their mobile phone at this stage to keep in contact with the trainer and get used to how to use it in case of an emergency. The mobile phone is part of their support network and very important to their overall safety.

This part concludes when the young person has successfully completed the whole journey on their own.

4. Shadowing

The part of the training when they begin to do sections of the route on their own we call 'shadowing'. This is where the young person travels on their own while the travel trainer is watching them discreetly to see if anything changes when they haven't got an adult in sight.

We start this 'shadowing' slowly; so the young person completes small parts of the journey on their own to begin with and then gradually build this up.

Things we look out for:

- How confident do they appear?
- Are they making good choices?
- Do they vary the route at all?
- Do they behave differently when they are on their own, especially around road safety?
- Are they treated differently by others when on their own?

The shadowing is often done by another trainer as this person can get closer without the young person looking to them for help.

5. What if?

The final part of the training makes sure that the young person knows what to do if anything goes unexpectedly wrong on their journey.

Some incidents will have come up during training but others will need to be engineered to give the young person the chance to problem solve. It's impossible to cover everything but it is essential the student knows what to do in an emergency and is able to make informed choices when situations change or they become uncomfortable with anything.

The essential part of this training is that the young person can use a mobile phone in some way to get help if needed. There are apps available if normal use isn't possible.

Areas we cover are:

- What to do if a bus / tram doesn't turn up
- What to do if they get off at the wrong stop
- How to cope if they get completely lost
- What if a stranger talks to you
- What if someone tries to steal something
- What if someone calls you names
- Where can you find help if you've lost your mobile

And there you have it!

So, not much to travel training then, it's a doddle!

6. Extra training - if required

There are three main areas that we sometimes feel the need for different types of training. For some young people verbal and visual training needs to be supplemented with some real life examples for them to really take it on board.

a) Stranger Danger

Sometimes a student finds it difficult to work out who a stranger is and presenting them with a real life example helps.

Some also need actual practice to see how they react in real life situations and for them to gain confidence.

b) Assertive Skills

Both in connection with stranger danger but also in dealing with difficult motorists, transport staff/ drivers and members of the public, some students need to practice being assertive.

Getting the balance between being aggressive and passive is very difficult at times and can be improved with some real life drama training.

c) Behaviour

Some students coping behaviours need shaping for them not to gain unwanted attention that they then struggle to cope with.

This can be done by videoing or acting out behaviours for them to see.

This gives the young person the chance to rethink their own behaviour and coping strategies.



7. Finally

After reading through all that is involved in the travel training process you may feel it is a daunting task.

But it's worth it! To see a young person's self esteem and confidence grow is a powerful and life changing opportunity.

You can help by encouraging them each step of the way. Practice skills with them when you are out and let their trainer know of any success's or stumbling blocks.

Together we make a strong partnership.

They will gain from your trust and desire for them to succeed.

It is all about giving young disabled people the skills to be a more independent person in their own right.



Useful Contacts



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Transport for
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