

Independent travel training: Together- Shadow- Meet

Before training starts it is important to think about the skills that your young person has and also thinking about routes they would like to start with.

Initial skills: There are a range of skills associated with travel that are clearly valuable and that are often taken for granted. Not all of the skills listed below are essential for all journeys, they are given as a checklist. Maybe not all of these list are relevant for your young person, but hopefully the list is useful:

- Managing behaviours: calm, including when waiting at the bus stop, as well as on the bus.
- Communication skills, does the individual need to speak to the transport staff.
- Road safety skills, including walking safely away from the kerb, using different types of pedestrian crossing, judging speeds.
- Skills in handling money, knowing how to use passes and being able to ask for the correct ticket.
- It may be useful for some individuals to be able to tell the time and understand the 24hr clock, understanding how much time has passed and when to get off the bus, or when it is late.
- Reading timetables and being able to plan a route.
- Locking the door and handling keys.
- Planning the most convenient route.
- Stranger-danger, including when not to give out personal information.
- Handling emergencies, knowing how, and who to ask for assistance.
- Using mobile phone.
- Access to contact numbers.

Assessing the route: It is a good idea to plan route that the young person is going to use, so that all the skills needed for the journey are covered. This can include things like road safety awareness and having travel passes with them.

It is a good idea to:

- do a risk assessment of each route which should highlight specific dangers and how to tackle them, for example safe crossing points across busy roads, crossing car parks safely by using the pedestrian route clearly marked.
- Do a route assessment at the times of the day that the person is expected to travel alone. For example if they are going to be using a route at 7am and 3pm it is important that journeys are planned for this time, as traffic conditions and volume of traffic may be different at other times of the day. Ideally both outward and return journeys would be assessed.
- The route should be assessed regularly and always if conditions are known to have changed, for example if a bus route is changed due to traffic diversions, a bus stop is moved or a new pedestrian crossing is introduced. Consider if the route can be completed in a suitable time given the young person's abilities.

Together - Travelling with your young person

Together: the initial part of travel training will be accompanied travel on the actual route that is to be used with detailed step by step instruction (see checklist). The purpose being to teaching the young person to make decisions at each stage of the journey, ideally these decisions will be unprompted. It is important that the young person learn the consequences of the decisions that they make. This will sometimes involve allowing them to make mistakes. But we all learn from mistakes!

The checklist is useful at this stage as it identifies, for example, where more support may be required, or where a young person is managing with little prompting.

Repetition:

For all of us, repetition is essential to learning. An important part of travel training and confidence building is repeatedly making journeys.

Everyone is different and learn at different speeds, so assume that at least a few accompanied journeys will be required to initially. It will depend on circumstances and a range of factors such as:

- The abilities and commitment of the individual.
- The confidence of the parents / carers.
- Additional journeys supported by parents / carers.
- The ease and length of journey, for example if it includes changing buses, if so more practice may be required.
- Reliability of the transport service.

Some individuals may need less input depending on the familiarity of the route, frequency of travel and individual ability.

Shadow - Being close by when they are travelling

When a young person is comfortable and travelling safely along a chosen route, making their own decisions but in the company of a parent or family member, the next step is shadowing. This allows the young person to travel independently, however they are closely supervised by their parent/ carer or family member from a safe distance.

Shadowed journeys may include several stages including walking at a safe distance behind the young person, this allows the trainer to check that they are mindful of safety when crossing roads, follows the usual route with no deviations.

When you and your young person feels confident at this stage, the next stage is meeting the young person travelling independently & being met by you, a family member or a friend at the end of their journey.

Meet - Joining them at the end of the journey

The final stage of the training is when the young person makes the journey on their own.

Once a person has begun to travel independently you can -if need be -start to introduce additional journeys and new routes. This may involve some additional training but as the core skills have been learned the process is quicker.

Reviewing progress is really important. There may also need to be recognition and acceptance that for some individuals traveling independently is not going to be an option.