



Greater Manchester Independent Travel Guide

Travel support and information for young people and their families



BEE NETWORK



GREATER MANCHESTER
DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

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This guide was produced in collaboration with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester travel trainers, families, education and local authority professionals.



Introduction

Learning to travel independently is an important step towards greater freedom and self-confidence for young people with additional needs. It can help young people build essential life skills and confidence to take part in new experiences. It gives young people more control and choice in their everyday lives. Independent travel also plays a key role in improving awareness of community safety and how to navigate different travel situations confidently and safely.

This guide is designed to support young people on their journey to becoming independent travellers. It offers practical tips, step-by-step advice, and useful resources to help make travelling alone a safe and positive experience.

“At first, I was very nervous and scared about my daughter travelling independently. Travel training led to her being able to travel independently to school and home, which requires her to take three buses. This developed her confidence and taught her safety. She has since gone on to travel to other locations.”

- Tameside parent

You can find more Greater Manchester case studies on the Transport for Greater Manchester website.

1. Before you start

This section will cover preparing for your trip from planning your journey to packing your bag. Consider discussing these before you set off.

Planning your route

- Once you know where you would like to go and when, use the timetables online or at the stop/station or the **Bee Network App** to plan your journey.
 - Understanding the 24-hour clock may be useful as many timetables and journey planners are displayed this way.
 - If you don't already have it, you can find a link to [download the Bee Network app here](#) alongside videos on how to use its features.
- The **Bee Network App** can be used to:
 - Plan any journey and see expected arrival times using public transport (bus, tram and train) and active travel (walking, wheeling or cycling). The journey planner will also show Park and Ride options.
 - Get live departure times for local bus, tram and train stops and stations.
 - Track your bus live on map and see live locations for all buses from a stop near you.
 - Buy tram tickets, Bee Bus tickets, and Bee AnyBus + Tram travelcards, using Google and Apple Pay.
 - See travel alerts for tram, bus, train and road and get major incident alerts.
 - Rate your journey.
 - Get contact information and access the non-emergency Greater Manchester Police Live Chat service.

Using timetables

To plan a journey with the help of a timetable, follow these steps:

- **Step 1: Find the right timetable** – Timetables show you when buses, trains, or trams arrive and leave. You can find them online, on apps, or at stops and stations. If you need help, ask a trusted adult, support worker, or transport staff.
- **Step 2: Check the day you're travelling** – Make sure you're looking at the right section of the timetable for the day you're going (like a weekday, Saturday, or Sunday).
- **Step 3: Find your stop or station** – Look for the place where you will get on and where you want to get off. Timetables usually list stops in the order of the route.
- **Step 4: Check the times** – Read across the row for your stop to see what time the bus, train, or tram is due. Try to be at your stop at least 5 minutes early.
- **Step 5: Plan your return trip** – If you're coming back the same day, check the timetable for your return journey too.

- **Step 6: Look for accessible options** – Some apps and websites show which transport services are wheelchair accessible or have step-free access.
- **Step 7: Ask for help if you need it** – Transport staff are there to help. You can also ask a family member, teacher, or carer to help you plan ahead.

Using the Bee Network app

Follow these easy steps to plan a journey using the Bee Network App:

- **Step 1:** Open the Bee Network App
- **Step 2:** Tap the “Plan” icon at the bottom of the screen.
- **Step 3:** Enter your Start and End locations.
- **Step 4:** Select when you’d like to leave or arrive using the “Leave now” dropdown menu.
- **Step 5:** Select the mode you’d like to use (e.g. bus, tram, train, cycle) using the “Options” dropdown menu. You can also select step-free access in this menu to filter out results that include steps.

Things to remember

- Before leaving, check that transport services are running from your starting point to your destination and are on time.
- Ensure that you have contact details of the people you are meeting, so you can let them know if you will be late.
- Consider an accessible route and your requirements (e.g. sensory).
- Planning a safe route is important when making a journey.
- The fastest route may not always be the safest (e.g. well-lit, CCTV, near safe places in case of emergency).
- If you’re unsure of a new route, consider practising. You may prefer to practice at quieter times, such as between 9am and 4pm when fewer people are traveling.
- Look out for permanent landmarks that can help guide you.
- Displays onboard transport will show the destination for a service, even if you’re not going there e.g. your train’s destination may be Blackburn, but you are only travelling as far as Manchester Victoria.
- If you are using your phone, consider your data or Wi-Fi points along the route.
- Before you leave, check the weather using the [Met Office app](#) or [website](#). Consider whether your clothing is suitable.

Journey Planner

If it's helpful, you can use a table (like the one below) to plan your journey.

Stages of your route Write down the different stages of your route here	Your notes Include information such as street names, permanent landmarks, bus/tram/train numbers or destinations
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Travel Checklist

Are you ready to go? Use this checklist to double-check by ticking off the items below.

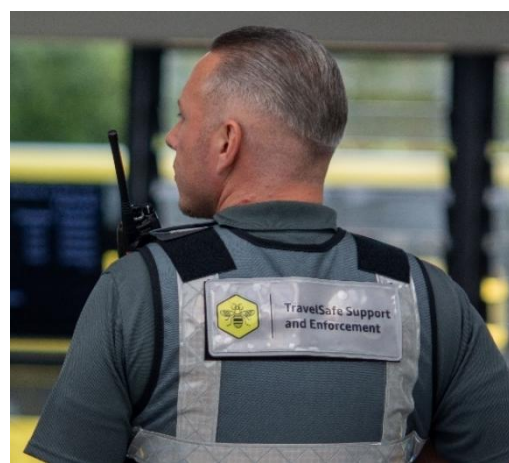
Event	Item	Tick
Packing my bag	Store these items safely in a zipped or internal pocket.	
	Keys	
	Money (cash, coins, and/or bank card)	
	Travel pass	
	Charged mobile phone	
	Phone charger	
	Medication (if needed)	
	Other passes (e.g., Disability Pass, Our Pass, igo card)	
	Any paper tickets (e.g., pre-paid QR code or train tickets)	
	Tissues	
	Appropriate clothing (umbrella, coat & hat)	
	Snack and drink	
	Journey details or travel instructions	
Emergencies	Does a trusted contact know your route and destination?	
	Do you have emergency contacts saved in your phone?	
Leaving the house	Do you have your belongings?	
	Lock the door (if needed) and store keys safely	
	Safely position your bag and valuables for the trip	

2. Travelling safely

Once you're prepared to travel, the most important thing is knowing how to do it safely. This section covers resources for staying safe while using public transport and while at stops and stations, in addition to road safety for parts of your journey made on foot.

General safety

- Keep a trusted contact informed of your journey progress.
- When asking for help, always ask an **appropriate person**—a member of staff wearing a uniform and identification badge (e.g. a driver or passenger assistant, police officer or TravelSafe Officer).
 - Check for official logos and identification badges.
 - TravelSafe Support and Enforcement Officers (pictured) wear a grey uniform.



- Anytime you feel unsafe, you can contact the Police discretely on your phone via [Greater Manchester Police live chat](#) using the link or under "Account" in the Bee Network App.
- For non-emergency help and support, call Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on 0161 244 1000 Monday to Friday from 7am to 8pm or Weekends and Bank Holidays from 8am to 8pm.
- Be careful with strangers who are not identified as an **appropriate person**. Never give out your personal details, such as your name and address.
- At every tram stop, there are orange emergency help points. If you can't find an appropriate person, press the button for help (pictured).



Road safety

- Ensure that you are confident crossing the road, looking and listening carefully.
- Only cross the road where it is safe (e.g. where you can see traffic from a distance). Where possible, always use pedestrian crossings, even if this means walking a little bit further.
- Do not use your phone whilst walking or use headphones which block traffic sounds.
- Consider wearing clothing that will help drivers see you better.

Safety on public transport

- Think about where you will wait. Find a safe place like a waiting room or shelter.
- Don't stand too close to the road or tracks.
- Keep clear of doors as they open or close.
- Check the display on the front of the vehicle to make sure it's the right service for



you (*pictured below*).

- When you board, state your destination to the driver or attendant, if available, so they can support you if you are on the wrong bus, tram or train.
- Sit downstairs and near to the driver when travelling by bus but save priority seats for others unless you need them yourself.
- Keep your belongings close and your valuables secured in a zipped or internal pocket.
- If you must move around when the vehicle is in motion, use the handrails.
- If you are lost, ask an **appropriate person** for help or call your emergency contact.
 - Bus stops have two road names on them to help explain where you are.
- If you accidentally leave your personally belongings somewhere during your journey, [report lost property here](#).

3. Buying tickets and passes

Buying tickets

You can buy tickets on the bus, at tram stops and train stations, but you can also use the websites and apps below to buy tickets ahead of time.

For instructions on how to purchase tickets on the bus or at tram or rail stops/stations, please watch our Ticketing video.

For instructions for downloading and buying tickets using the Bee Network app, please visit the [Bee Network App webpage](#).

You can buy train tickets through individual train company apps, such as Northern or TransPennine. See the resources section for more apps and links. Some companies, such as Trainline, do charge a small fee for booking.

Here are some helpful links:

Northern link - [Buy train tickets - Northern](#)

Northern app - [Download Northern App](#)

TransPennine link - [Buy Train Tickets - TransPennine Express](#)

TransPennine app - [Download TransPennine Express App](#)

Trainline link - [Buy train tickets - Trainline](#)

Trainline app – [Download the Trainline App](#)

Concessionary travel passes for young people



You may be entitled to free or discounted travel through a concessionary scheme.

- [Travel passes for disabled people](#) - Free bus, tram, and train travel for people with qualifying disabilities
- [Our Pass](#) - Free local bus travel and off-peak 1-day and weekend Metrolink travelcards at half adult prices for 16-to-18-year-olds
- [igo card](#) - Child fares on bus and tram for 5- to 16-year-olds
- [Care Leavers](#) - Free local bus travel for 18–25-year-olds who are classed as a care leaver

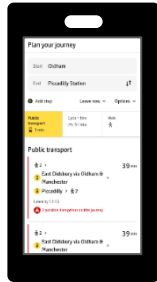
For a complete list of resources, including additional concessions and discounted tickets, and application instructions, please visit the [Bee Network website](#) at <https://tfgm.com/tickets-and-passes>.

4. Your journey

Bus travel

1

Plan your journey



2

Wait at the stop & put out your hand to stop the bus



3

Board and present or buy your pass/ticket

A single to Wigan Bus Station, please.

A 7-day Any Bus child ticket, please.

4

Enjoy the ride!



5

Press the stop button to get off



6

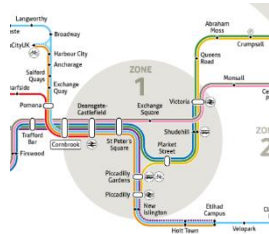
Arrive at your destination



Tram travel

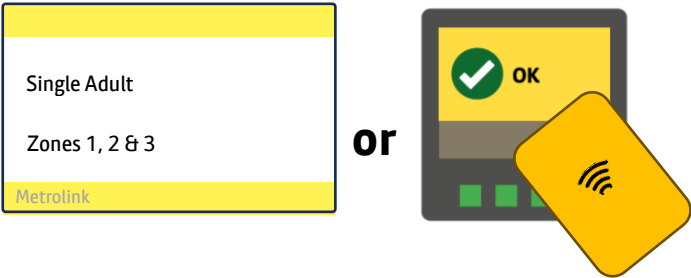
1

Plan your journey



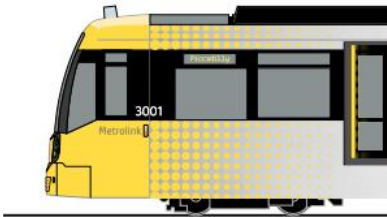
2

Buy a ticket or tap in



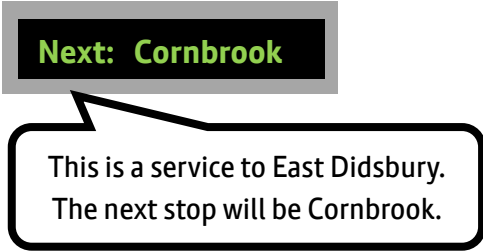
3

Board the tram



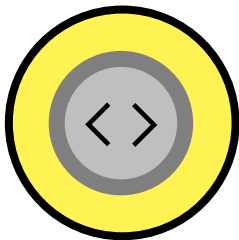
4

Enjoy the ride!



5

Press the button to open the doors



6

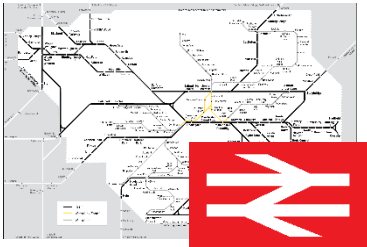
If you tapped in, tap out at your destination



Train travel

1

Plan your journey



2

Buy your ticket



3

Find your platform

Time	Destination	Plat.	Status
09:32	Bristol TM	3	On time
09:37	Mcr Airport	13	
09:38	Blackpool North	14	



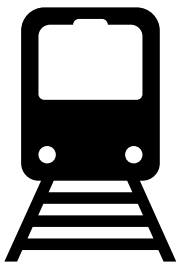
4

Show or scan your ticket at the barrier



5

Board the train



6

Enjoy the ride!

Next: Salford Cres.

This is a Northern service to Blackpool North. The next station is Salford.

7

Press the button to open the doors



8

Hold onto your ticket to show at your destination



Ring and Ride

Ring and Ride is a low-cost minibus service for people who find it hard to use buses, trams, or trains—this might be because of their age, a disability, or other additional needs.

With Ring and Ride, you can:

- Choose where you want to go and what time
- Be picked up from your door and dropped off at your destination
- Travel up to 6 miles (sometimes more, for special trips like hospital visits)

Unlike normal buses that always follow the same route and timetable, Ring and Ride changes its route depending on who needs a ride. This makes it a flexible and helpful way to travel to places like the shops, appointments, or to visit friends.

Who Can Use It?

You can use Ring and Ride if you:

- Have a TfGM travel pass for disabled people
- Have a TfGM travel plus pass for disabled people
- Have a TfGM travel pass for older people and are aged 70 or over with walking difficulties
- Use TfGM travel vouchers for disabled people

Other Important Info

- You also need to register before your first trip. It's free and you can do it online, by phone, or by post.
- You can bring one adult with you
- The minibuses are wheelchair accessible
- Drivers are trained to help people with different needs
- The service runs:
 - Monday to Saturday: 8am to 10:45pm
 - Sunday: 8am to 10:25pm
 - Closed on bank holidays

For more information on Ring and Ride or instructions for booking, please visit <https://tfgm.com/public-transport/ring-and-ride-minibuses>.

Taxi travel

If you can't walk, bike, or take public transport to your destination, you might choose to take a taxi. You can book a taxi through a local taxi company—by using an app, calling by phone, or going to a taxi rank, which you'll often find at major train stations or in town centres.

Some taxis—typically black cabs (pictured)—can be flagged down on the street or picked up at a taxi rank. Others must be booked in advance.



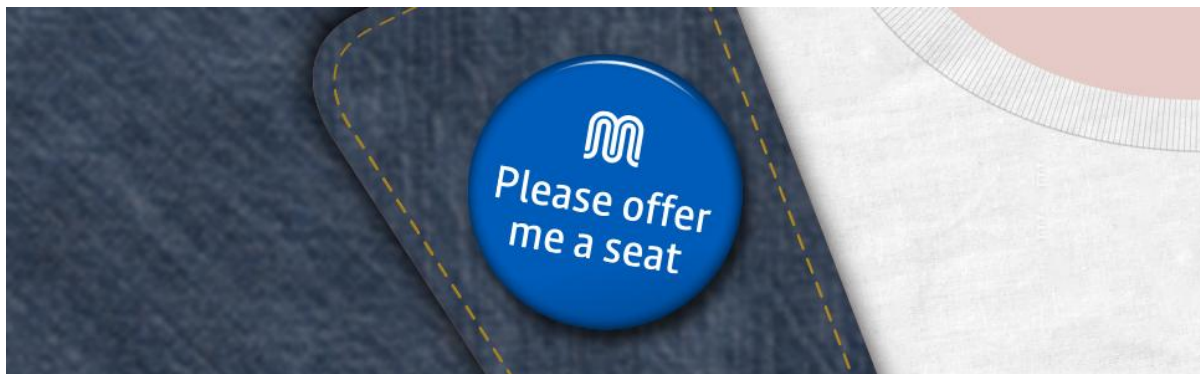
When possible, choose an option that lets you pay the fare before your trip, so you don't have to handle payment during the journey. There's no requirement to tip your driver.

For your safety, take a photo of the taxi's registration plate and share it with your emergency contact before the trip starts, along with your journey details. Most drivers are fine with this, but it's polite to ask first.

Other safety tips include confirming the name the taxi was booked under before getting in and checking that the driver's ID badge is clearly displayed and the photo on the badge matches the person driving.

5. Additional needs information

In addition to this guide and the associated videos, there are other resources available to make travelling as someone with additional needs a little easier.



TfGM offers badges that indicate to other customers that you need to sit down. These can be ordered via the TfGM website at <https://tfgm.com/accessibility/please-offer-me-a-seat>.



TfGM has signed up to the **Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme** supporting people with disabilities that may not be so obvious to the casual observer. TfGM staff have received training and will recognise a Sunflower lanyard, wristband or badge, so they are aware that a person may need additional support while travelling. For more information, visit <https://hdsunflower.com/>.






Additionally, Henshaws and TfGM have worked together to develop a yellow bus hailer, as well as a fluorescent orange pass wallet, to help make catching the bus easier and more accessible. A bus hailer is a flip pad that uses both bold and embossed numbers and letters, with the braille version underneath to select the number of your bus and hold it up for the oncoming bus. You can get one for free from travel shops, which are found in larger bus stations, or by calling TfGM at 0161 244 1000.






Some of Greater Manchester local authorities offer individual travel training, as well as some schools and colleges. Visit the [Travel Training in Greater Manchester webpage](#) or your local authority's website for more information on what's available.



These and other tools and tips for travelling on the Bee Network are available on the TfGM website at <https://tfgm.com/accessibility/help>.

6. Appendix – Resources

Support and safety		
<u>TfGM Help While Travelling</u>	Tools and tips to help you travel safely across GM.	
<u>TfGM Safe and Secure Travel</u>	Report incidents, live chat, travel safe partnership and other ways to keep you safe.	
<u>Greater Manchester Police Live Chat</u>	Report an issue via Live Chat	
<u>Report Lost Property</u>	Resources for reporting lost property	
<u>TfGM Plan A Journey</u>	Plan your journey within Greater Manchester	

<u>Bee Network App</u>	The Bee Network is your one-stop-shop for all your local journeys, making it easier and cheaper to get around. You can use the app to plan a journey, get travel updates and buy tickets.	
<u>Ring and Ride</u>	An accessible, low-cost minibus service for people who have difficulty in using public transport.	
Tickets and passes		
<u>Tickets and Passes for Young People</u>	Information on tickets and concessions available to young people in Greater Manchester.	
<u>Travel passes for disabled people</u>	If you are disabled, you could be eligible for a pass that gives you free and low-cost travel in Greater Manchester and the rest of England under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.	
<u>Our Pass</u>	Free local bus travel and off-peak 1-day and weekend Metrolink travelcards at half adult prices for 16-to-18-year-olds in Greater Manchester.	

<u>igo Card</u>	An igo cards allow 11–16-year-olds to travel using child tickets on buses and trams in Greater Manchester.	
<u>Free travel for Care Leavers</u>	Free local bus travel for 18–25-year-olds in Greater Manchester who are classed as a care leaver.	
Additional resources		
<u>Please offer me a seat</u>	The badge indicates to other customers that you need to sit down.	
<u>Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme</u>	The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme supports people with disabilities that may not be so obvious to the casual observer.	
<u>Travel Training in Greater Manchester</u>	Travel training schemes across Greater help teach young people and adults who need additional support to make journeys using public transport safely and confidently on their own.	

<u>Traffic Signs</u>	Traffic signs are used to give orders, warnings, direction, information and road works. You can learn some through this link.	
<u>It's Everyone's Journey</u>	Developed by the Department for Transport in partnership with advocacy groups, 'It's Everyone's Journey' brings together those who want to improve public transport for disabled people and deliver real change.	



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Transport for
Greater Manchester