

Home to School/College Transport Consultation

SUMMARY

- 1.1 The City council currently spends a total of circa £3.5 million per year on home to school/college transport.
- 1.2 Whilst extensive work has been undertaken within the council to reduce this cost over recent years, financial pressures continue as the demand for transport increases.
- 1.3 A large proportion of the home to school transport budget funds pupils who are eligible in law for free transport assistance to school. In addition, the council also provides transport to other pupils and students at its own discretion. The law gives discretion over which types of transport the council can provide.
- 1.4 The majority of transport spend is for students with statements of Special Educational Need (SEN).
- 1.5 A number of factors have recently affected SEN students' travel needs:
 - To support SEN students' transition to adulthood and develop the independence skills needed to enable access to employment and leisure, Derby has recently begun an independent travel training programme. However, the current Transport policy acts as a disincentive to this, as when students are able to travel independently they are not always provided with support.
- 1.6
 - The recent introduction of specialist post 19 education in the city has reduced the need for extensive travel in order to access specialist education.
- 1.7
 - Benchmarking against other Local Authorities (LAs) has found Derby has a generous post 16 SEN transport offer, where support is provided for longer and is fully subsidised. Both Leicester City Council and Derbyshire County Council have recently reduced support to post 16 students.
- 1.8
 - In line with the approach to provide personalised support to students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and further aid the transition to adulthood, personal travel budget options are included in the transport offer.
- 1.9 This report provides an overview of the Transport proposals to be consulted upon.

RECOMMENDATION

2.1 To approve the consultation as noted.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 In order to manage increased demand for transport whilst working within a balanced budget position, a number of changes are proposed for consultation.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The City council currently spends a total of circa £3.5 million per year on home to school/college transport. The majority of spend is for students with statements of Special Educational Need (SEN) who are placed at schools across the city.
- 4.2 In order to manage increased demand whilst balancing the budget the proposals are to reduce **discretionary** home to school/college travel provision and move to lower cost modes of travel.
- 4.3 The following areas have been identified for consultation:

Proposal 1: Reduction in discretionary Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements.

- It is proposed in future to provide transport assistance only to those students who have severely restricted mobility* up to the end of the term in which they reach the age of 19. Where transport assistance is provided, it may be in the form of a personal travel budget.

*as defined by being eligible for the Disability Living Allowance mobility component at the higher rate.

- 4.4 Derby City's current policy is considered a disincentive to promoting independence, as travel by public transport is not fully subsidised by the Council yet taxi travel is.
- 4.5 Benchmarking against other Local Authorities (LAs) has found Derby has a generous post 16 SEN transport offer - transport for students with SEN continues for longer (until the pupil turns 25 years), with the default method of transport provided being a taxi.
- 4.6 Other Local Authorities have recently amended policies to significantly reduce transport provision in this area, with reductions in post 16 provision (Leicester City Council) and post 19 provision (Derbyshire County Council).
- 4.7 Additionally, there is a reduced need for extensive travel to education provision - specialist post 19 education provision has recently been made available in the city, and during 2013/14 two thirds of post 16 SEN pupils were travelling to a provision within the Derby City boundary on public transport routes.

4.8 **Proposal 2: Changes to types of transport assistance offered to eligible special educational needs pupils.**

- It is proposed transport assistance to eligible SEN pupils would include:
 - Travel pass or season ticket for a school bus service or local bus service,
 - Independent Travel Training to support students to become independent travellers,
 - Fuel allowance, or
 - Personal travel budget.
- Where the parent/carer has a motability vehicle for the benefit of the child, there is a reasonable expectation that this will be used to transport the child to school and fuel will be reimbursed.

4.9 Independent travel training allows for better preparation for adulthood by aligning home to school travel support for older students with sustainable travel methods used in adulthood. It is now in place in most local authorities, and recognised as good practice.

4.10 Derby has recently begun a training programme across the city, supporting students to become more independent and enabling access to employment and leisure.

4.11 Personal travel budgets are promoted within the SEND reforms as a way of giving families greater flexibility in sourcing the transport best suited for their child's needs. They may also provide cost savings by efficiencies gained from parents sourcing their own methods of transport.

4.12 Many LAs have moved to personal travel budgets over the last two years. During 2014/15 Derby City begun to pilot personal travel budgets.

4.13 **Timescales for changes**

Proposal 1 is proposed to be implemented from September 2015 for all students. Proposal 2 is proposed to be phased in from immediately following approval.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Accept an on-going budget pressure for Home to School/College Transport.

5.2 Increasing the budget in line with forecasted costs.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Estates/Property officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Anita Barnett, Solicitor Janet Bowlzer, Group Accountant Frank McGhee, Service Director, Commissioning, Children and Young People Paula Nightingale, Head of Inclusion and Intervention, Children & Young People Dave Dowbenko, Group Transport Manager, Neighbourhoods
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For more information contact: Background papers: List of appendices:	Lisa Melrose 01332 642569 lisa.melrose@derby.gov.uk None Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Home to School/College Transport Consultation Appendix 3 – Proposed Home to School Transport Policy
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IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

- 1.1 The City council currently spends a total of circa £3.5 million per year on home to school/college transport. Whilst extensive work has been undertaken within the council to reduce this cost over recent years, financial pressures continue as the demand for transport increases.
- 1.2 The council currently transports 139 post 16 students at a cost of £480,000 per annum. This cost is wholly met by the council. The average cost of providing this transport is £3,451 per student per annum.

Proposal 1 would seek to achieve savings of approximately £200,000.

- 1.3 During academic year 2013/14, 767 pupils (including post 16) were provided with transport assistance at a cost of £2.7 million per annum. The average cost of providing this transport was £3,520 per student per annum. This cost is wholly met by the council.

Proposal 2 would achieve savings by reducing the unit cost of travel per pupil, on a gradual basis.

Legal

- 2.1 There is a general duty on local education authorities to assess the school travel needs of their area and to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport under section 508 Education Act 1996.
- 2.2 The Council must have regard to DfE guidance 501-2014 'Home to School Travel and Transport guidance', and DfE guidance 025-2014 'Post 16 Transport to Education and Training', in considering the recommendations made in this report.
- 2.3 The former policy states that, 'local authorities should consult widely on any changes to their local policies on school travel arrangements, with all interested parties included in the consultations'.
- 2.4 Consultations should last for at least 28 working days during term time. This period should be extended to take account of any school holidays that may occur during the period of consultation. Good practice suggests that any such changes should be phased in and come into effect as pupils start school.

Personnel

- 3.1 There may be an impact on roles as different types of transport provision are sourced.

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4.1 None noted.

Equalities Impact

5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken, and will be revisited during consultation, as students with special educational needs would be affected.

Health and Safety

6.1 None noted.

Environmental Sustainability

7.1 Any potential impact on carbon emissions would be noted in the EIA.

Property and Asset Management

8.1 None noted.

Risk Management

9.1 There is a risk that post 16 students do not attend, or drop out part way through their course if transport is no longer provided free of charge.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 10.1
- Achieving learning potential.
 - Good health and well-being.
 - Value for money strategy.
 - Being safe and feeling safe.

Home to School/College Transport Consultation 2014

The City council currently spends a total of circa £3.5 million per year on home to school/college transport. Whilst extensive work has been undertaken within the council to reduce this cost over recent years, financial pressures continue as the demand for transport increases.

In order to manage increased demand whilst balancing the budget the proposals are to reduce discretionary home to school/college travel provision and move to lower cost modes of travel.

If approved, the changes will be implemented in September 2015 for pupils over 16 years, and take effect immediately for other students who are due a review of their travel arrangements.

This consultation has been produced to give pupils/students, parents/carers and other people the opportunity to comment on the City council's proposals for these changes.

All councils are facing considerable pressure on public services and Derby City Council has to find savings of £81m over the next three years to balance the budget.

Whilst a large proportion of the home to school transport budget funds pupils who are eligible in law for free transport assistance to school, the council also provides transport to other pupils and students at its own discretion. Additionally, the law gives discretion over which types of transport the council can provide.

The consultation seeks views on this matter, covering:

- ♦ Discretionary Post 16 Special Educational Needs transport arrangements, and
- ♦ Types of transport assistance offered to Special Educational Needs pupils.

Derby City Council has a duty to ensure that every child in the city has access to a school place; for some children the council has a legal duty to provide free home to school travel assistance.

Most parents/carers send their children to the school in their catchment area school, or to the nearest available school. The council provides free transport assistance to the nearest available eligible school for any full-time pupil when there is no school place available within the 'statutory walking distance' as stated in the Education Act 1996.

Current provision

Local authorities have statutory responsibilities to provide home to school transport assistance in specified circumstances. This provision is protected in law and will be unaffected by the proposed changes. This includes providing transport to pupils who:

Age / Type of Pupil	Statutory entitlement
Pupils up to the age of 8 (year 3)	Free transport assistance to the nearest available eligible school if it is more than two miles walking distance from home. (see note 1)
Pupils between the ages of 8 and 16 (years 4 – 11)	Free transport assistance to the nearest available eligible school if it is more than three miles walking distance from home.
Pupils aged between 8 and 10 (years 4 – 6) who are in eligible for Free School Meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit	Free transport assistance to the nearest eligible school if it is more than two miles walking distance from home.
Pupils aged between 11 and 16 (years 7 – 11) who are eligible for Free School Meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit	Free transport is provided to one of the three nearest eligible schools if it is between two miles (walking route) and six miles away (road route). If a school is preferred by reason of a parent's religion or belief then free transport is provided if the school is more than two miles (walking route) and not more than 15 miles away (road route) and it is the nearest school of that faith.

Note 1: Eligible schools are defined as the closest school(s) to the address at which the child resides with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s). A faith school is only classed as an eligible school for children of the faith represented by the school; a single sex school is only classed as an eligible school for children of the same sex admitted to the school (i.e. only boys or only girls).

The following key changes are proposed:

Proposal 1: Discretionary Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements

In addition to the above statutory requirements, the Council provides free transport to Post 16 students where they have statement of special educational needs and receive their education in either an enhanced resource/special school sixth form, or they attend a further education college/other education provider and they meet the published eligibility criteria.

This is a discretionary provision not required by law.

Eligibility for transport to a college is based on the student having previously had a statement of special educational needs; the student being unable to travel on public transport (as evidenced by a letter from a medical professional); the course of study being over 16 hours per week; and the college being the nearest designated college,

or other (subject to further criteria). Students remain eligible until the end of the term they turn 25 years old. This includes students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The council currently transports 139 post 16 students at a cost of £480,000 per annum. The average cost of providing this transport is £3,451 per student per annum. The council fully subsidises the cost of this transport for all students that receive transport, regardless of income – there is no charge to the student. The majority of students with SEN are transported in a private hire vehicle (taxi/minibus), door to door, which is provided free of charge.

The council does not provide free or assisted transport to any other post 16 student group, including those with low incomes.

In order to enable the Council to manage an increased demand for transport without putting increased pressure on an already overstretched budget position it is proposed in future to provide transport assistance only to those students who have severely restricted mobility* up to the end of the term in which they reach the age of 19.

*as defined by being eligible for the Disability Living Allowance mobility component at the highest rate.

Transport assistance provided for students over the age of 16 may be in the form of a personal travel budget.

It is proposed this change will come into effect from September 2015 for **all** students, including those that are currently receiving a service.

Proposal 2: Types of transport assistance offered to eligible special educational needs pupils.

During academic year 2013/14 Derby City Council provided home to school transport assistance to 767 pupils with special educational needs at a cost of £2.7 million per annum, and at an average cost of £3,520 per student per annum. This cost is wholly met by the council.

The majority of eligible students with SEN are transported in a private hire vehicle (taxi/minibus), door to door, which is provided free of charge.

Where it is a legal requirement to offer free transport assistance, the law gives discretion over how transport is provided.

- In order to support students' transition to adulthood, it is proposed that more students should be supported to travel to school by commercial bus.
- In line with the approach to provide personalised support to students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), a personal travel budget should be able to be considered.

It is therefore proposed that in future, transport assistance to eligible SEN pupils would include:

- Travel pass or season ticket for a school bus service or local bus service,
- Independent Travel Training to support students to become independent travellers,
- Fuel allowance, or
- Personal travel budget.

Where the parent/carers has a motability vehicle for the benefit of the child, there is a reasonable expectation that this will be used to transport the child to school and fuel will be reimbursed.

It is proposed these changes will be phased in immediately should the changes be agreed.

- The full proposed Home to School Transport Assistance Policy can be viewed at: [insert link](#)
- The current Home to School Transport Assistance Policy and can be viewed at:
<http://www.derby.gov.uk/media/derbycitycouncil/contentassets/documents/schools/DerbyCityCouncil-Transport-Policy-parents-Oct2011.pdf>

The council is also currently implementing all aspects of the current Home to School Transport policy and is reviewing entitlement for children with special educational needs according to the council's defined criteria.

Have your say.....

The council is seeking your views on the proposals set out above. You can respond by completing the online questionnaire or by printing a copy of the questionnaire to fill in and sending (no stamp required) to:

CYP Commissioning
Home to School/College Transport Consultation
Derby City Council
FREEPOST
MID24259
DERBY
DE1 2BR

Members of the public can access the council's website free of charge on computers in the Council House or in local libraries within the city.

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