



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

School Transport

- *your views*



Derby City Council has to make budget savings over the next three years to meet a number of significant new pressures. As part of these savings, we consulted in Spring 2007 on proposals to:

- change the charging policy for transport to faith schools
- increase all other home to school transport charges

A number of concerns were raised in response to the previous consultation. These concerns were highlighted in a report to the Council Cabinet on 31 July 2007. You can access this from the Council's website: www.derby.gov.uk/CMIS. Click on the link 'Council Meeting Information System', click on 'Committees', and select the Council Cabinet from the List.

We have tried, wherever possible, to take these concerns into consideration and are now asking for final comments on a series of amended proposals.

We have enclosed a new questionnaire with this leaflet.

Please complete and return it to us by **Monday 3 December 2007**. You can either:

- complete the questionnaire, put it in an envelope and return it to us using our FREEPOST address (so you won't need a stamp) to:

Derby City Council
Children and Young People's Services
FREEPOST MID18771
DERBY
DE1 9BR

Or

- complete the questionnaire online from our website. You can find the document at:

www.derby.gov.uk/schooltransport

All responses to the Spring 2007 consultation will be considered again, alongside comments received on these revised proposals, after 3 December.

If we decide to amend the current policy, we will implement it from September 2008.



Legal Background

By law, Derby City Council only has to provide **free** home to school transport for pupils who live in the Council's area **AND** attend their nearest suitable school which is at least:

- two miles from home for pupils aged four to seven
- three miles from home for pupils aged eight to 16.

For a number of years the City Council has, at its discretion, also provided free transport for pupils attending, on faith grounds, a faith school which is not their nearest suitable school. In addition, in some areas the Council provides transport on payment of a fare for pupils that live within walking distance of, and attend, their nearest suitable school.

Budgetary pressures and the increasing costs of providing this transport have led the Council to reconsider its policy on charging for all discretionary home to school transport – to faith schools and non-faith schools.

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, certain pupils will be eligible to receive free home to school transport from September 2007 (primary) or 2008 (secondary) including secondary school pupils who are eligible for free school meals or those whose parents are entitled to the maximum level of working tax credit. This transport will be provided to any one of three suitable schools closest to their home where those schools are between two and six miles away. For faith schools, the distance is between two and 15 miles.

Current provision and costs

We currently spend approximately £378,000, or £645 for each child, every year to transport pupils free of charge to faith schools on faith grounds on supported school bus services. In addition, we spend £450,000 every year, or £475 for each child, providing subsidised school transport for pupils up to age 16 who attend their nearest suitable or faith school but who live within walking distance of that school. Subsidised transport tends to be provided in areas where pupils have difficulty getting a direct commercial bus service to take them to school. Pupils aged 16 or over should be travelling using their b_line card, which entitles them to half fares on commercial bus services. Any spare fare-paying places may be offered to students aged 16 or over once all other students have been allocated places.

Amended Proposals

The results of the Spring 2007 consultation showed that the key concerns relating to charging were that:

- The cost for each pupil was considered to be too high (ranging from £350 to £500 for faith pupils and £320 to £420 for other discretionary non-faith pupils)
- The maximum charge for each household was considered to be too high (capped at £1,000) and unaffordable for larger households
- There were not enough opportunities to pay the advance charges (a maximum of two payment options was proposed).

In response to these concerns, the amended proposals on which we are consulting are:

- to introduce standard fares of £290 each year for primary-age pupils and £350 each year for secondary-age pupils who either:
 - live within walking distance of their nearest suitable school or
 - who attend a faith school which is not their nearest suitable school
- to introduce larger discounts for households with more than one child up to age 16 travelling to school. Discounts to be 10% of the full charge for the second child, 20% for the third child and any additional children, with a maximum charge for each household of £850 each year
- to increase the number of charging options as follows:
 - (a) one payment by cash, cheque or postal order in July
 - (b) two payments, one in July and one in February, by cash, cheque or postal order
 - (c) one payment by cheque in July, followed by seven monthly direct debit payments between September and March
- for faith pupils, to apply charges only for those starting at a faith school from September 2008. Other discretionary charges will apply to all pupils from that date.

The table below summarises the proposed new charges to be introduced from September 2008 for discretionary transport to faith and non-faith schools.

Annual charges for each household for faith and non-faith pupils travelling on discretionary school bus services

No. of secondary-age children travelling for each household	No. of primary-age children travelling for each household			
	0	1	2	3 or more
0	£0	£290	£550	£785
1	£350	£610	£850	£850
2	£665	£850	£850	£850
3 or more	£850	£850	£850	£850

Advantages and Disadvantages of Proposed New Charging Policy

Although the proposed new advance charges for discretionary home to school transport will not cover the full cost of providing the transport, they will have a number of advantages, including:

- the bus network will be maintained and pupils will still be able to travel safely and directly to school
- the introduction of a fare for all will avoid the complexity of calculating different fares on different routes
- advance charging will provide more certainty of obtaining fares for travel
- financial savings will be achieved which will help to protect other Council services.

The main disadvantages are:

- people may choose to take their children to school by car rather than paying which may have a negative impact on congestion
- the financial impact for families who will have to pay (more) for their child's transport from September 2008.



FAQs

Who are you consulting?

- Parents of all pupils attending schools in Derby
- Parents of children who live in Derby but who attend faith schools outside the city
- Governors and Headteachers of all Derby schools and neighbouring faith schools
- The diocesan education authorities for Derby
- Neighbouring local authorities
- The Confederation of Passenger Transport.

I am not sure if I live in Derby City Council's area – how will I know?

If you pay your Council Tax to Derby City Council, you live in their area.

My child is over 16 but still at school. Can they travel on these services?

Your child's b_line card entitles him or her to half fare travel on commercial buses. We will only offer places, at the fare paying rates, to students aged 16 or over if spare places are available after all other students have been allocated a seat.

Why are you making the savings on transport?

Most of the services we provide have to be provided legally and we have no choice in funding them. However, we have a choice over faith and other subsidised school transport. There are few such services that we provide and this was felt to be the least damaging to children and young people. Discretionary school transport affects relatively few pupils but the costs are significant. It seems fairer to all pupils to target this, as not all pupils can benefit from the current subsidy and other forms of preferences are not supported by free transport. Low income families will be protected by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which extends the right to free transport.

Why are the charges for primary age and secondary age pupils different?

Because journeys made by primary age pupils are generally shorter than journeys made by secondary age pupils.

When will the charges start on currently free transport?

The new charges for currently free transport to faith schools will be introduced for new pupils from September 2008.

When will advance charging start?

Advance charging will start in September 2008. From this date, it will not be possible for pupils to pay fares when boarding the school bus.

My child already attends a faith school and receives free transport – will they have to pay from September 2008?

No, only pupils starting at a faith school from September 2008 will be required to pay. Pupils who started at their current faith school before September 2008 will continue to receive free transport until they change school or reach the age of 16.

Will there be a maximum charge for each household?

Yes, as well as discounts for households with 2 children and 3 or more children, there will be a maximum charge for each household of £850 each year.

Will the annual charge increase each year?

Yes, the charge for each household will increase in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI) on an annual basis, subject to any further decisions relating to annual budget setting.