

Have your say on proposed changes to the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and mainstream Home to School Transport Policies



Tell us how this might affect you.

Online: www.Leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-policy-changes

For general enquiries or comments about this consultation phone
0116 305 0002 or email passengertransport@leics.gov.uk

Public consultation: Please submit your views by midnight on
Thursday 21 December 2017

These proposals would directly impact home to school transport from September 2019 for:

- Children under five with Special Educational Needs (SEN) from low income families likely to require support with transport to nursery
- Students with SEN likely to require support with transport to post 16 education settings (including those from a low income household)
- Mainstream students likely to require support with transport to post 16 education settings (including those living in a low income household and/or rural isolated area)

Why change?

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is currently undergoing a significant period of change. The council has to make £66m of savings over the next four years, this is on top of the £161m saved since 2010 – this means difficult decisions about services in all areas of the council's work.

By 2019/20, the Environment and Transport Department's budget is expected to reduce to £58m. This is a 27% reduction from the 2010/11 budget of £80m, not allowing for inflation.

At the same time SEN transport costs have increased from £6.5m in 2011/12 to £9.2m in 2016/17, an increase of 42%. Furthermore, without intervention, these costs are expected to grow by 4 to 5% every year.

The council does not have a statutory duty to provide home to school/college transport free of charge to students aged 16 to 19 in the same way as it does for children aged 5-16. The same applies to home to nursery transport for children under five with Special Educational Needs (SEN). With transport costs for all home to school transport continuing to rise, we now have to consider how we can reduce the cost of non-statutory education transport provision.

We are not proposing to implement any changes until September 2019.

We are not proposing any changes to the Home to School Transport Policy for children aged 5-16.

What is the current policy?

Special Educational Needs (SEN) nursery and post 16:

Currently, we provide transport to nursery and school/college for approximately 400 children with SEN under five, and between the ages of 16-19.

We charge an annual contribution of £660 for this transport, but low income families are currently exempt from this charge. Some forms of transport provided, e.g. taxi and minibus provision cost the council much more than the contribution made by families.

Recently national policies have been re-focussed and are aimed at supporting and enabling individuals, families and communities to be more independent and resilient.

In support of this, we have introduced Personal Transport Budgets as an alternative option to council provided transport. This offer is open to eligible children and young people with SEN (all ages) giving families greater freedom and independence to source the transport solution that is best for them. 132 students (8%) have requested a Personal Transport Budget for this academic year with over 120 agreed; this offer will continue in future years.

Mainstream post 16:

The majority of mainstream post 16 students already make their own transport arrangements to access post 16 education and training with no help from the council. This includes using the local bus network, accessing one of the privately run bus services (arranged by schools or bus companies) or by other arrangements; in these instances students go directly to the operator to purchase a bus pass (prices vary depending on the route).

Where a student is eligible for post 16 transport, we will consider how best to transport the student (at a cost of £660 per year unless they are exempt due to low income).

The following options are currently being considered:

Privately run bus services: we will purchase bus passes on local or privately run bus services for eligible post 16 students who apply.

LCC contracted school buses: these are school buses we arrange to transport eligible primary and secondary school students aged 5-16. Under our current policy we ensure there are enough additional seats on these school buses for eligible mainstream post 16 students. Any spare seats on these routes are made available as “fare paying seats”, to any other post 16 students (not eligible for transport support) on a first come first served basis for £800 per year.

Taxi: where neither of the above two options work for eligible post 16 student (e.g. as a result of living in a rural isolated area), we would arrange taxi transport.

More detailed information regarding the policy and current eligibility criteria can be found on the website www.leicestershire.gov.uk/haveyoursay/school-transport-policy-changes

The proposals we are considering

We are considering three separate proposals:

- Reducing the level of discount available to children and young people from low income families for transport to nursery and post 16 education.
- To stop offering council arranged taxis and minibuses to transport SEN students to post 16 education and offer a Personal Transport Budget instead
- To stop providing transport to post 16 education for eligible mainstream post 16 students

No decisions about these proposals have yet been made. We are committed to a wide consultation on these proposals before making any decisions.

Taking into account the results of this consultation we may look to introduce one, two or all of the above proposed changes.

Your feedback is important and will be used to inform decisions about these proposals.

Our proposals in detail

Please note the eligibility criteria for support with school transport are not changing. Our proposals would change what travel options are being offered to eligible students.

Proposal 1:

Reducing the level of discount available to students from low income families (SEN and mainstream)

Many people with children aged under five and 16-19 arrange their own transport and do not need support from the council. For those who do ask for our support, we currently require a contribution towards the cost of transport.

The cost for the 2017/18 academic year is £660 per student per year. However, where a student is from a low income family, the student is exempt from paying this fee (resulting in a 100% discount). This policy is more generous than most other councils, with the majority expecting students to pay a contribution towards the cost of transport, and in some cases the full contribution.

We are considering reducing the level of discount given to students from low income families attending education aged 0-4 and 16-19. Through the consultation we want to understand the impact of any changes to this discount on different age groups, as well as views on what level of discount should be applied.

For the purpose of this policy, 'low income families' are families with pupils who receive free school meals or families in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit payments.

Proposal 2:

To stop offering council arranged taxis and minibuses to transport SEN students to post 16 education and offer a Personal Transport Budget instead.

Transport for those aged 16-19 with SEN costs the council an estimated £1.9m every year. The cost per student, based on around 375 pupils being transported by the council in 2017/18, is approximately £5,000 per year. The cost of transporting a young person with SEN is, on average, eight times higher than that of a mainstream post 16 student and reflects the more complex support they require.

A significant proportion of the budget is spent on taxis and minibuses. We take SEN students to 86 post 16 destinations both inside and outside of Leicestershire - this is costly and not sustainable.

Therefore, in line with other councils, we are proposing to explore alternative ways to enable SEN students to continue to access post 16 education and training with a Personal Transport Budget. Transport provision through taxi or minibus would only be provided in exceptional circumstances.

Personal Transport Budgets have been rolled out as an optional offer for SEN students and their parents; 15% of SEN post 16 students have already chosen this option for the 2017/18 academic year. More information about Personal Transport Budgets is available on page 6.

There will be a continuing expectation that students contribute towards the cost of transport to post 16 education, and this would be reflected in the Personal Transport Budget allocated. The Personal Transport Budget may be higher for students from low income families. Students would still need to be eligible under the post 16 transport policy rules to qualify.

Proposal 3:

To stop providing transport to post 16 education for eligible mainstream post 16 students

Under this proposal, we would stop offering transport to all eligible mainstream post 16 students. They would be expected to make alternative travel arrangements, such as:

- using local bus services, this might involve buying separate passes where a connection is required;
- using privately run school buses not organised by the council;
- Paying £800 for a fare paying space on council arranged transport (including schools buses). As at present, spaces would not be guaranteed and would be allocated on a first come first served basis;
- Making their own transport arrangements, for example by lifts with other families or walking/cycling to local bus services

In order to help students from low income families and/or students living in rurally isolated areas access the above options, the council would offer a travel allowance of up to £150 per year towards a student's private travel arrangements. This is in line with other councils. The travel allowance amount would be determined on a case by case basis.

We are also seeking your views on whether a higher annual travel allowance should apply to mainstream post 16 students from low income backgrounds.

Personal Transport Budgets

What is a Personal Transport Budget?

A personal transport budget will help you to get your child to school.

You can apply for one if your child is eligible for school/post-16/nursery transport.

How does a Personal Transport Budget work?

- Each month we'll transfer your child's agreed Personal Transport Budget into your chosen bank account.
- Each year we'll review the plan with you and the school - to make sure it is the most appropriate arrangement.
- You must spend the money in a way that ensures your child can get to school.

How could you use a personal budget?



Arrange for a friend or relative to cycle or walk with your child



Drive your child to school or car share with other parents

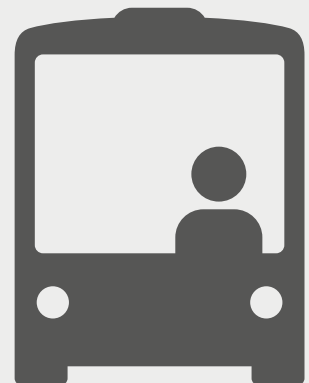
Pay for childcare for a younger child – so you can take your child to school



Get a bus pass for a friend to go with your child



Pay for a bus pass for your child



Work with the school to join up with other parents

How much is on offer?

Your personal payment will depend on your child's age, their support needs, their timetable, and the distance from home to school using the council's measuring software.



YOUR CHILD'S AGE



THEIR SUPPORT NEEDS



TIMETABLE



DISTANCE FROM HOME TO SCHOOL

(using the council's measuring software)

The benefits of a personal budget

- It allows you the freedom to make your own arrangements – to suit your family
- It gives you control over how the money is spent
- You can share the cost and save money by joining up with other parents
- You could use the money to help your child become more independent

For more information about Personal Transport Budgets or to apply visit www.leicestershire.gov.uk/applyPTB

Who would be impacted by these proposals and how?

Children with SEN from low income families who require support with transport to nursery

Under proposal one, from September 2019, low income families with a child requiring SEN transport support to nursery education may need to contribute to the cost of transport.

Students with SEN requiring support with transport to post 16 education and training

Under proposal one, from September 2019

Students with SEN from low income families requiring transport support to post 16 education may need to contribute to the cost of transport. Students from other families would continue contributing as per the current arrangements.

Under proposal two, from September 2019

All families with a young person with SEN requiring transport support to post 16 education would be offered a Personal Transport Budget to enable them to arrange their own transport.

There will be an expectation that families / students make a contribution towards the cost of their transport. This contribution will be reflected in the rate of the Personal Transport Budget. Students from low income families may have a different rate.

Transport provision through taxi or minibus would only be provided in exceptional circumstances. Families of young people requiring such transport would continue to be expected to contribute towards the cost of transport. If proposals one and two are both adopted, low income families may no longer benefit from a 100% discount and may need to contribute towards the transport costs.

Mainstream students requiring support with transport to post 16 education

Under proposal one, from September 2019

Mainstream students from low income families may need to contribute towards the cost of transport to post 16 education arranged by Leicestershire County Council. Students from other families would continue contributing as per the current arrangements.

Under proposal three, from September 2019

Mainstream students in post 16 education will no longer be offered any transport support by Leicestershire County Council and will be expected to make their own arrangements.

Eligible students in isolated rural areas and/or from low income families would however be offered a travel allowance to assist with transport costs.

Parents of children affected by the proposals may be able to access alternative funding to support travel arrangements for example the mobility allowance element within a PIP/DLA award or the government's national 16-19 Bursary Fund.

How the consultation will work

The consultation runs from 25 September and ends at midnight on 21 December 2017.

During the consultation, we will be holding a series of meetings to provide you with information to help you submit your views on the proposals.

The dates and venues for the consultation events are:

9 October

Dorothy Goodman School Hall, lower site, Stoke Road, Hinckley, 6.30pm

11 October

Birkett House School Hall, Station Road, Wigston, 6.30pm

Additional events will be published on our website.

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-policy-changes

There is no need to register in advance for these consultation events. If you have any special requirements, e.g. a hearing loop, or if you require support to enable you to attend an event, please contact us on 0116 305 0002 or email passengertransport@leics.gov.uk

To submit your views, please fill out the consultation survey and make sure it reaches us by midnight on 21 December 2017 at the latest. The survey is available online on at **www.leicestershire.gov.uk/school-transport-policy-changes**

Paper copies of the survey are available on request by calling **0116 305 0002**.

What happens next?

Following the consultation we will consider all of the responses received and a report will be taken to the council's Cabinet in spring 2018.

If the proposals are agreed a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) and mainstream Home to School Transport Policy would be published in September 2018, with changes taking effect from September 2019.

You can view the latest information in a number of ways

Visit us online www.leicestershire.gov.uk/haveyoursay

Our web pages will be kept up-to-date with the latest information and developments.

You'll also be able to access the survey here.

Follow us [@leicscountyhall](https://twitter.com/leicscountyhall) for general updates from the council, including the developments on the budget.

Alternatively, you can telephone **0116 305 0002** to ask for information in printed or alternative formats.

જો આપ આ માહિતી આપની ભાષામાં સમજવામાં થોડી મદદ ઇચ્છતાં હો તો 0116 305 0002 નંબર પર ફોન કરશો અને અમે આપને મદદ કરવા અવસ્થા કરીશું.

જેવર ત્રુહાનું ઇસ જાણકારી નું સમજાવ વિષ વ્રુષ મદદ રાહીલી ટૈ તાં રિરપા વરલે 0116 305 0002 નંબર ડે રૂન વરે અડે અસીં ત્રુહાડી મદદ ડાહી રિસે ડા પૂરૂપ વર ડવંરો।

এই তথ্য নিজের ভাষায় বুঝার জন্য আপনার যদি কোন সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয়, তবে 0116 305 0002 এই নম্বরে ফোন করলে আমরা উপযুক্ত ব্যক্তির ব্যবস্থা করবো।

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات سمجھنے میں کچھ مدد درکار ہے تو براہ مہربانی اس نمبر پر کال کریں
0116 305 0002 اور ہم آپ کی مدد کے لئے کسی کا انتظام کر دیں گے۔

假如閣下需要幫助，用你的語言去明白這些資訊，請致電 0116 305 0002，我們會安排有關人員為你提供幫助。

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tej informacji w Twoim języku, zadzwoń pod numer 0116 305 0002, a my Ci pomożemy.