

Equality Impact Assessment – Home to School Transport

Title of service being assessed: Potential change to Home to School Transport policy and non-statutory provision.

Name of Department: Department of Environment & Transport

Name and role of the officers completing this assessment:

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Defining the service:

1. What are the aims, objectives of purpose of the service? Are these reflected in the relevant service plan?

The purpose of the home to school transport service is to enable students to benefit from free travel to and from school, if they live more than the distance specified by statute from their catchment school. Other discretionary concessions are currently available, including transport for students remaining at school beyond statutory school age, transport for students attending denominational schools and transport for non-entitled students at a cost to the user. The potential changes to the scheme would involve discontinuing some or all of these discretionary concessions, and introducing new policies in response to the move of many schools to academy status independent of the local authority.

2. What outcomes does the service want to achieve and for whom? How have these been determined? Please also list any relevant performance indicators.

The legal framework determines the requirements for the home to school transport service. The desired outcomes are that available school transport services reflect the Acts of Parliament concerned and that those students entitled to free travel under the arrangements currently stipulated use the services provided. The potential changes to the scheme would provide a contribution to savings the County Council is having to find in response to budgetary pressures and the withdrawal of some central government funding. There are no specific performance indicators related to this provision, although use of home to school transport by those entitled has a beneficial impact by reducing the numbers of car journeys made in the county of Leicestershire and in relieving congestion and improving safety around schools at opening and closing times. Providing this service also makes it easier for parents to ensure students' attendance at school.

3. Who is responsible for delivering the service? Are there any other organisations involved? If other organisations are involved are they fully compliant with the Council's Equality Policy?

Leicestershire County Council is responsible for delivering the service. The Sustainable Travel Group and Fleet Services (who maintain the Council's vehicles) work in tandem with private bus service companies and taxi companies to deliver the service. These external organisations are aware and supportive of the Council's Equality Policy.

4. Consider the answers given questions 1, 2 and 3 and assess whether your service results, or could result in adverse impact on or discrimination against different groups of people. If you consider that there is adverse impact or discrimination, or the potential for either, please outline below and state whether it is justifiable or legitimate and give your reasons for this.

Target Equality Group	Does it have a Positive Impact?	Does it have a Negative Impact?	If it has a negative impact, is the level of this impact high or low?
Age	Yes. The statutory requirement provides a service specifically to children of statutory school age.	Yes. Discontinuing the current discretionary provision, or continuing to offer it but at a significantly higher cost to users, will make it more difficult for 16 to 18 year olds to access further education.	Low – Many 16 to 18 year olds will be able to travel by alternative means, generally public bus services or private transport. If the discretionary provision remains but at a higher cost to users, it will remain relatively attractive to those whose alternative mode of transport would be more costly. There may be a high impact for a minority of students either living in remote areas with no access to either public bus services or private transport, or on low income and unable to afford daily fares. Those students under age 16 from low income families are protected by special statutory arrangements.
Belief or faith	Yes. The current discretionary policy provides a service specifically to students attending schools chosen	Yes. Removing the current discretionary policy will make it more difficult for students to	Low - Some students will be able to use existing alternative transport (public bus services or

	for reasons of faith: similar provision is not generally available to other students falling outside the statutory requirements to provide school transport.	continue to attend faith schools	parents' private car). Commercial bus operators may feel able to introduce specific schoolchildren's services at a daily fare, or schools or groups of parents may be able to organise transport. The County Council will actively support these initiatives. Those students under age 16 from low income families are protected by special statutory arrangements.
Disability	No. Transport for disabled students and those with special educational needs is provided under different policy and provisions.	No. Transport for disabled students and those with special educational needs is provided under different policy and provisions.	
Sexual Orientation	No. An individual's sexual orientation does not feature in the administration of school transport and is not relevant in respect of younger children.	No. An individual's sexual orientation does not feature in the administration of school transport and is not relevant in respect of younger children.	
Gender	No. An individual's gender does not feature in the administration of school transport.	No. An individual's gender does not feature in the administration of school transport.	
Race	Yes. Documents are available in alternative languages.	No. An individual's race does not feature in the administration of school transport.	

There is likely to be an adverse impact for some groups of people that is justifiable and legitimate rather than illegal. Reasons for this are as follows:

- In the current economic and funding climate the County Council may not feel it is able to fund non-statutory services.
- Consultations are being conducted to obtain a public opinion on whether to continue funding non-statutory services: any savings will contribute towards a reduction in Council Tax for all Leicestershire residents, including all those in the various equality strands.
- In many cases, students will be able to find alternative means of transport, albeit at a generally higher cost.
- There is no requirement to offer discretionary home to school transport services and an increasing number of other shire counties are opting not to do so for budgetary reasons.

5. If you have identified adverse impact of discrimination that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people. This arises out of the duty to promote good relations between people of different groups and is in keeping with the Council’s approach to social cohesion.

List process and criteria	Essential?	Barriers identified and groups affected
Public consultation	Yes	All affected groups, including special interest organisations, invited to comment publicly on the proposals to curtail non-statutory service provision. Consultation documentation available by web, post and large print on request.

6. Consider what barriers you can remove, and what reasonable adjustment may be necessary to ensure the service is accessible (this could include providing the service elsewhere). Consider what actions you will need to take to address any unmet needs that you have identified.

Barriers and reasonable adjustments:

Literature about the scheme must be accessible and so must be clear, simple and concise avoiding jargon where possible. Some language barriers may still exist, but the use of the County Council’s Language Line service may mitigate most of these. Application forms signpost the availability of versions in alternative languages.

Reasonable adjustments include ensuring that all literature should be available in other formats upon request and available through schools and colleges, as well as directly to students, parents and guardians via the County Council website.

7(a). What does analysis of the data tell you about how well your service is meeting the needs of the various equality groups? How up to date is the information.

The statutory home to school transport service is used by a large majority of students who qualify for transport assistance. If discretionary services continue but at a higher cost to the user than now, these are likely to be less well-used because it is accepted that there may be cheaper alternatives for many users.

There is currently some resistance to use of the discretionary services for students beyond statutory school age and those travelling to faith schools. The reasons are cost of the service compared to alternatives; the duration of some home-to-school journeys and the inconvenience for 16 to 18 year old students of not being able to vary their daily start and finish times if using the services. These reasons apply across all equality strands within the eligible groups.

(b) Which groups of people are you hearing from? Are there groups of people that you are not hearing from? What can you do to ensure that people are able to provide feedback on the service? Is there information on service user needs held by other services that would be appropriate for your services?

Data Type	Source (s)	Analysis of the data and/or gaps in information	When last gathered
Compliments, complaints and comments	Feedback through drivers, bus companies, school staff and the County Council's Customer Services Centre and website.	Verbal and written comments, including compliments and complaints	Ongoing
Consultation responses	Widely circulated consultation document about potential changes to the scheme	Responses by web, phone and hard copy	April 2012

8 Social cohesion is a priority for Councils. Review all the actions and targets that you have identified as a result of this equality impact assessment as to what social cohesion issues could arise.

The potential changes to home-to-school transport may marginally reduce social cohesion due to preventing a minority of students of non-statutory school age from pursuing further education. However, it is not thought that this would be any different in Leicestershire to places elsewhere where the discretionary home-to-school transport service is not provided.