

Have your say on proposed changes to home to school transport



Tell us how this might affect you

Online: www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

For general enquiries or comments phone **0116 305 0002**
or email transportassessments@leics.gov.uk

Public consultation: Submit your views by June 15 2014

What are we consulting on?

We are asking for views on proposed changes to our home to school transport policy for mainstream schools – this covers schools and academies but not special schools.

Why are we consulting again?

During February and March, we asked for your views on proposals to change the existing policy. Just over 2,000 responses were received along with a number of alternative policy suggestions. It was clear from these responses that there were concerns about appropriate transport being provided when pupils change schools. Another key concern was that Leicestershire residents wanted the ability to express a preference for their traditional catchment school, instead of the nearest school which could be in a neighbouring local authority.

We have responded to this feedback and are now proposing a new policy which aims to address many of the concerns raised by parents and schools.

Why does the policy need to change?

The Government has encouraged schools to become academies and these national changes have altered the education landscape significantly and mean that there are now a number of academies in Leicestershire.

Academies and free schools can choose to change their age ranges and their catchment areas, and a number have chosen to do this. This means that many catchment and transport eligibility areas overlap.

The council's transport policy needs to reflect these changes where they have occurred and be clear on the transport arrangements should areas that haven't changed, change in the future.

You may already be aware that we need to save over £110 million over the next five years. Although these latest proposals are not expected to save money now, they may reduce the risk of increasing costs in the future by avoiding multiple transport eligibility when academies have overlapping catchment areas.

Details of the previous consultation are available at: www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport



What does the current policy say?

Our current policy (http://www.leics.gov.uk/mainstream_policy_2014-15_final_april_2014_v1.0-2.doc) fits the more traditional high school (10/11-14 year-olds) and upper school (15-16 year olds) model. This policy was frozen to reflect admission and age range arrangements in place on 31st May 2012

Transport and catchment areas have developed over time to take account of traditional boundaries and school capacity. This was to ensure that high and upper schools had enough students to fill the school. In practice, this meant that pupils were transported to schools with space and not necessarily their nearest school.

It says that free transport is offered to:

- primary school pupils who attend the catchment area school (or other nearer school) and their home address is more than two miles away
- secondary school pupils who attend the catchment area school (or other nearer school) and their home address is more than three miles away

What are the changes we are now proposing?

Following your feedback, we've changed our proposals.

For pupils aged between 5 and 16 we will still provide the legal minimum of free transport for pupils over the statutory walking distances, 2 miles for primary age and 3 miles for secondary age from home to the nearest school (or educational placement) with available spaces.

The new proposals are to provide transport as above but in addition to provide:

- free transport to the nearest Leicestershire school, with places available. A school will not be seen as appropriate if it doesn't offer a transfer entry point that is compatible with the current school attended by the pupil

but

- where there have been no changes to catchments or age ranges since May 2012 to continue free transport to the catchment school in those areas

What is the likely impact?

Free transport to primary schools is likely to be largely unchanged.

The impact of this policy is that for areas where age range and/or catchment areas have changed since May 2012 then transport will be provided to the nearest school or nearest Leicestershire school.

For those schools that have not changed admissions areas or age ranges, transport will continue to be provided from their traditional geographic catchment area school or to the nearest school until such time as a change occurs within these areas. This may be either by the school itself or by neighbouring schools at which point transport would be provided to the nearest school or nearest Leicestershire school.

In effect the policy recognises where change has occurred, maintains the same arrangements where change hasn't happened but is clear what will happen if changes occur in the future.

Under these proposals, primary children who attend a school without a year 6 (age 10+) will be provided with transport to the nearest appropriate secondary school with spaces, and with a year 6. In September 2014, secondary schools accepting children at year 6 are: Shepshed High School, Castle Donington Community College, Gartree High School, Manor High School, Bushloe High School and Abington Academy.

There are extended rights for low income families – please see the frequently asked questions.

What about 16+ transport?

New guidance has raised the age to which young people have a duty to stay in education, employment or training. There has been no change in the legislation governing transport for those aged 16+ so this remains a discretionary service that we don't have to provide. However, the new proposals below will still provide a limited choice of transport options for 16+ students.

What does the current policy say about 16+?

Our current policy says that students who live more than three miles away from either the nearest school sixth form or nearest post 16 further education college are eligible for assisted transport. Currently, students can also get assisted transport if they attend a school or college which is further away if it is the nearest which offers their chosen course.

The charge for 16+ transport for the 2014/15 academic year will be £425 and there is an exemption to this charge for students from a qualifying low income background.

What are the changes we're proposing for 16+ transport?

To continue to provide assisted transport for those students living more than three miles away from either the nearest school sixth form or nearest post 16 Further Education college.

The new proposals are to provide transport over 3 miles from home as above but in addition to provide

- transport to the nearest Leicestershire Further Education college

or

- transport to the nearest Leicestershire school sixth form but to continue providing transport to the catchment school with a sixth form in areas where there have been no changes to catchments or age range since May 2012

What is the likely impact?

Assisted transport for 16+ students would be more limited and these proposals wouldn't allow for students to attend a school or college which is further away if it offers their chosen course.

There will still be a charge for eligible students unless they are from a low income family – please see frequently asked questions.

Local bus company season tickets may offer better value and more flexible bus travel options.

When would the changes take place and are there any transitional arrangements?

We are proposing that any change to the policy will only affect pupils starting at primary school or transferring to a secondary school in September 2015.

If a child is already part way through their education and they currently have transport, this will continue until they have to leave or move to a new school because of their age. Eligibility for free transport would be reassessed at this point, as it is currently.

For 16+ students who qualify for transport assistance under the old policy, the proposal is that they will remain eligible providing they stay on the same course. If they change course, start a new one or their personal circumstances change (move address for example) then they will be reassessed under the new policy.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Your views are important and help us to understand what effect the proposed changes might have on you. Please send us your views by filling in our questionnaire by Sunday, 15th June 2014. This can be accessed:

Online

www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

By post

Cut off the questionnaire attached to this leaflet and return to the following freepost address (no stamp required):

School Transport Policy Consultation (Room 700)
Leicestershire County Council
Have Your Say
FREEPOST NAT18685
Leicester
LE3 8XT

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

How do we determine the nearest school?

For distances which are less than the statutory walking distances of two or three miles, we measure the shortest available walking route. Over these distances, we measure using the shortest available road route. This is because over three miles, a walking route may not exist.

We would assess your nearest school at the same time as the normal school admissions application process and would take account of available space in schools. This means that if the nearest school was full, transport would then be provided to the next nearest school with space.

Please note that under the new proposals, the 'nearest school' and 'nearest Leicestershire school' may be the same – this is most likely for addresses in the central part of Leicestershire. In some cases, but not all, the school may also be the traditional catchment school.

On the other hand, for families living close to the county border – near Leicester city or neighbouring counties - the nearest school may be in that other local authority area. In these cases, transport would be provided to either that nearest school or to the nearest Leicestershire school and this would be by parental preference. Again, the nearest Leicestershire school in some cases, but not all, may also be the traditional catchment school.

How do we measure distance?

We use a highly accurate software programme for measuring distances called MapInfo.

Is this about saving money?

During a recent consultation into our future spending plans, residents listed home to school transport as a service that could be reduced.

The proposals, however, are not expected to save money now, they are designed to reduce the risk of increasing costs in the future by preventing pupils becoming eligible for multiple transport options. This policy proposal is more generous than the statutory requirements and if implemented, it is expected that there will still be large numbers of children entitled to transport because they live over the statutory distance.

Are there any alternatives to the proposed policy?

Yes. This consultation is important as it enables your views to help shape the changes. Your views count and have resulted in this fresh round of consultation.

How does it affect parental preference for school places - this restricts choice doesn't it?

No - parental preference for admission to a particular school or academy is unaffected by these proposals. It has never been the case that eligibility to free transport is based on the parental choice of school. There has always been a policy setting out the criteria for eligibility to free transport and under the new proposals, this would generally focus on the distance between home and the nearest school or nearest Leicestershire school with places, rather than to the traditional catchment school.

What happens if the school my child attends changes its age range or admissions area in future?

This may affect a child's eligibility to free school transport. If this happens, we would need to review transport in that area and apply the new policy. We would also consider what transition arrangements would be put in place.

What happens if a new school opens up in my area?

Similar to the above, this may affect a child's eligibility to transport assistance. For example a new free school opening may become a nearer school than the one previously used to assess transport eligibility. If this happens, we would need to review transport in that area and apply the new proposed policy. We would also consider what transition arrangements the council would put in place.

What do the frozen policy and no change to admission catchment or age range refer to?

For schools where there has been no change in the admissions catchment area or age range we will continue to provide transport to the catchment school in line with the policy adopted by the county council in September 2012 i.e. using the Local Authority catchment areas as at 31st May 2012; until such time as changes affecting catchment area or age ranges occur (whether by the school itself or surrounding school changes).

Are there any extra rights for low income families?

Yes, the current extended rights for low income families are not affected by this consultation and continue to be available as required by statutory guidance and law. Details are in paragraph 6.0 of the current policy www.leics.gov.uk/mainstream_policy_2014-15_final_april_2014_v1.0-2.doc

What other transport is available?

Some schools have bus services organised by parents or the school itself, other schools have commercial 'school specials' and student season tickets are also available on most commercial bus services in Leicestershire.

The main commercial bus operators of Leicestershire also have student season tickets of various types that offer very flexible travel and, for post 16 students, can offer good value for money.

You can view the latest information in a number of ways

Visit us online www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay/school_college_transport

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.

Send an email to transportassessments@leics.gov.uk to register for the latest news and updates.



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 0965** to ask for information in printed or alternative formats including Easy Read.

जे आप आ माहिती आपनी भाषामां समजवामां थोडी मदद
छंथतां हो तो 0116 305 0965 नंबर पर फोन करथो अने
अमे आपने मदद करवा अवस्था करीथुं.

जेकर त्रुटांनू इस जाहकारी नू समझत विच ब्रुड मदद चाहीली
है तां विरपा करके 0116 305 0965 नंबर ते फोन करे अउ
असीं त्रुटांनू मदद छई विसे दा पृषय कर दवांगे।

এই তথ্য নিজের ভাষায় বুঝার জন্য আপনার যদি কোন
সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয়, তবে 0116 305 0965 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 0965 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 0965，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 0965,
a my Ci pomożemy.

In summary: proposed changes to mainstream home to school transport policy

For pupils aged between 5 and 16 we will still provide the legal minimum of free transport for pupils over the statutory walking distances (2 miles for primary age and 3 miles for secondary age) from home to the nearest school (or educational placement) with available spaces.

The new proposals are to provide transport as above but in addition to provide:

- free transport to the nearest Leicestershire school, with places available. A school will not be seen as appropriate if it doesn't offer a transfer entry point that is compatible with the current school attended by the pupil.

but

- where there have been no changes to catchments or age ranges since May 2012 to continue free transport to the catchment school in those areas

Similar proposals are also being made for post 16 students.

To continue to provide assisted transport for those students living more than three miles away from either the nearest school sixth form or nearest post 16 Further Education college.

The new proposals are to provide transport over 3 miles from home as above but in addition to provide

- transport to the nearest Leicestershire Further Education college

or

- transport to the nearest Leicestershire school sixth form but to continue providing transport to the catchment school with a sixth form in areas where there have been no changes to catchments or age range since May 2012

Your views

We are now asking for your views about this revised proposal to make changes to home to school transport.

Following the consultation period, your views will be considered by the County Council. If you have any questions about this consultation please contact: **0116 305 0002** or email: **transportassessments@leics.gov.uk**

Return this consultation form to:

School Transport Policy Consultation (Room 700), Leicestershire County Council,
Have Your Say, FREEPOST NAT18685, Leicester, LE3 8XT.

Alternatively you can complete an online version at www.leics.gov.uk/school_college_transport

Q1: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of transport to schools and academies?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of transport to academies:

Q2: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport to schools, academies and colleges?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposed policy for the provision of post 16 transport:

Q3: Do you agree or disagree with the council's proposals for transitional arrangements if this revised home to school transport policy is adopted?

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

Any other comments on our proposals for transition arrangements:

Q4: Do you have any alternative suggestions for a revised home to school transport policy?

About You

Leicestershire County Council is committed to ensuring that its services, policies and practices are free from discrimination and prejudice and that they meet the needs of all sections of the community.

We would be grateful if you would answer the questions below. You are under no obligation to provide the information requested, but it would help us greatly if you did. Information will be used to inform service development to ensure that what we are providing is fair and effective.

Q5: Are you male or female?

Male Female

Q6: What was your age on your last birthday?

Q7: Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?

Yes No

Q8: What is your ethnic group? (Please tick one box only)

White Mixed Asian or Asian British Black or Black British Other ethnic group

Q9: Are you a parent/carer of a child or young person?

Yes No

If yes, what are the ages of the children in your care? (Please tick all applicable)

0-4 5-10 11-15 16-18

Q10: Do you or your child(ren) make use of the home to school transport provided by Leicestershire County Council?

Yes No

Q11: Are there any post 16 students in your household who currently use our transport to education?

Yes No

Q12: Are you employed by a school in Leicestershire?

Yes No

Q13: Are you a school governor?

Yes No

Q14: What is your religion?

No religion Christian (All denominations) Buddhist Hindu
Jewish Muslim Sikh Any other religion or belief

Q15: What is your full postcode?

Q16: In total, how many cars or vans are owned or available for use by members of your household?

None One Two Three Four or more Don't know

Data Protection: Personal data supplied on this form will be held on computer and will be used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for statistical analysis, management, planning and the provision of services by the county council and its partners, Leicestershire County Council will not share any personal information collected as part of this survey with its partners. The information will be held in accordance with the council's records management and retention policy.