

Consultation on home to school and college transport

8th January, 2018 to 2nd April, 2018

North Yorkshire County Council provides travel assistance from home to school or college, for children eligible for help and we are required to do this by law. We also provide extra travel assistance for some children; this is in addition to the help which we must give and is discretionary. We are consulting on changes to these discretionary areas of our services and we are consulting on how we should provide travel assistance in future.

We have seen a significant increase in numbers of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities who require transport and increases in the distances that they need to travel and this is leading to rising costs. Since March 2015, there has been a 22 per cent increase in the numbers of children and young people being transported and there has been a steep increase in the number of post 18 students requiring transport assistance (66 per cent increase) and a 36 per cent increase in primary aged children.

Based on current trends, the cost for transport will reach an annual cost of £30m by 2025, which is significantly more than our current budget of £5m. In 2017/18, we will spend £8m, which will overspend the budget by £3m.

We are committed to ensuring that the transport budget is used efficiently and that flexibility is maximised for families in terms of how their children are transported to school. We are therefore consulting on three options. We have explained these options below. We have also explained who and how we are consulting, the timescale for the consultation and our equalities impact assessment, as well as how to complete the survey.

Who are we consulting?

We are consulting with the public on our proposals, specifically the following groups requesting their views;

- Parents, carers and young people;
- Schools and Further Education providers (e.g. colleges), including governors;
- Parent and carers groups, including North Yorkshire Parents And Carers Together;
- Neighbouring local authorities;
- Transport providers and operators;
- Councillors from the county, district, borough, parish and town councils; and
- Staff.

How are we consulting?

We are asking a number of questions, in a survey, about our proposals and for any other ideas and suggestions. The survey will be available online, via the council's website and via the Local Offer. We will also provide paper copies and an 'easy read' version. We will also hold events around the county, during the day and evening, to talk about the consultation and these will take place from January onwards.

What is the timescale?

We are consulting for 12 weeks (90 days), starting on 8th January, 2018 until 2nd April, 2018. Once the consultation has closed, we will review all of the responses and prepare a report for councillors on the results. They will consider any proposals to change our home to school transport policy and make a decision on 16th May, 2018. If there are any changes to our policy, these will be published by 31st May, 2018 and we will implement any changes by 1st September, 2018.

Information about our equalities impact assessment

We have drawn up an equalities impact assessment (EIA), which was included in the report considered by councillors on 19th December, 2017, when they decided to consult. We will update this following comments received during the consultation and councillors will consider it again before they make a decision.

We have identified that if the proposals are implemented, they may have a negative impact on some children and young people. However, without changes, we have identified that we cannot continue to provide the current home to school transport service. We anticipate any changes to the current home to school transport services will impact more on the following;

- Young people aged 16 to 25;
- People with special educational needs and disability and particularly those living in a rural area or families with a low income.

As these groups are more likely to find any changes difficult, there is potential for some negative impact. Therefore, if changes are made to current services, they will need our support.

We also anticipate that, if implemented, some changes may bring positive impacts to young people and their families, particularly with independent travel, training and more flexibility with personal budgets for transport allowances.

Completing the survey

Please give your feedback on the proposals outlined by filling in our online survey, at www.northyorks.gov.uk/consultations

If you would like a paper copy of the survey, please call our customer service centre on 01609 780 780.

Our proposals for consultation

Proposal 1

Removal of the free transport statement for special educational needs and disability (SEND) students, aged post 16 to 18, with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) from September 2018, to bring it in line with mainstream transport arrangements.

In accordance with the Department for Education guidance we are able to ask learners and their parents for a contribution towards transport costs. Currently, North Yorkshire County Council requests a contribution of £490 per annum for the provision of transport for aged post 16 mainstream young people, arranged by the local authority. This is reduced by 50 per cent for low income families. The current contribution requirement is not applied to children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and we currently pay for all of these related costs.

We are proposing that our policy is amended to bring young people with an EHCP in line with mainstream young people, who are currently paying the contribution of £490 per annum (with a reduced rate for lower income families).

This proposed amendment would apply to all young people starting a course of post 16 study from 1st September 2018.

This will be covered in our post 16 policy statement to be published on 31st May 2018.

Young people currently undertaking a post 16 course of study will be exempt from the contribution until their current course is complete.

Impact of the proposal

The average cost of transport for a post 16 SEND young person is £8,100 per annum; therefore the contribution from parents/carers would be around 6 per cent, if the £490 contribution fee was applied. We would still be subsidising the transport costs significantly and would continue to make the necessary arrangements for transport for those who have paid the contribution.

This option has the potential to generate a minimum of £57,000 by 2021, to contribute to the cost of SEND transport provision for post 16 to 18 students and assumes 100 per cent of families pay the contribution. This includes an assumption of 35 per cent of families who would pay the contribution at the low-income rate.

The introduction of a charging policy may lead to a proportion of parents arranging their own transport rather than paying the new contribution. The potential saving may therefore be much greater than £57,000. For example, if 50 per cent of parents currently in receipt of transport make their own arrangements and do not pay the contribution, then we can expect a saving of £599,000 on the SEND budget by 2021.

Proposal 2

Recognise SEND post-19 students as adults in education, and identify unmet transport needs in line with the council's adult social care assessment. (This proposal does not affect mainstream students.)

We are required to make arrangements for the provision of transport for adults, (those who are aged 19 or over but under 25 years of age), with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This is to support their attendance at their agreed educational establishment.

We are proposing to assess post 19 young people as adults in education, under the adult social care assessment process. If no other means of transport support to education is available, we will grant exceptional transport assistance for such students, in line with our health and adult services assessment policy.

This proposed amendment would apply to all young people (with an EHCP) starting a course of post 19 study, from 1st September 2018.

Students currently undertaking a post 19 course of study will be exempt from the assessment until their current course is complete.

Impact of the proposal

Post 19 transport currently costs £920,000 per year and increased by 41 per cent last year. This is the largest growth area since September 2014 and if current trends continue, it is anticipated that by 2020 this will double in size and in cost.

If 10 per cent of current adults in education are assessed as having other means of transport available, (such as their own mobility car, for example), this has the potential to generate a saving of approximately £90,000. If we assume 50 per cent as having others means of transport, the reduction in overspend has the potential to be £460,000.

The impact of this proposal means that transport provision will be in line with our health and adult services assessment policy. However, we will still provide support for young adults that do not have other means to access transport assistance.

Proposal 3

Increase Parental Transport Allowance to 45 pence per mile for all school aged children, when no other transport option is available.

Promote an Enhanced Parental Transport Allowance to parents whose children or young people have additional transport needs due to their SEND and would be travelling alone if the local authority had to commission their transport.

We are required by the Education Act 1996 to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, where necessary, to facilitate a child's attendance at school. The Act also places a duty on us to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport, promoting positive environmental and social benefits wherever possible. When this is not possible, we should review the situation and provide the most economical method of assistance – such as a mileage allowance paid to a parent driving their eligible child to school, in lieu of us making arrangements for a taxi to transport the child.

We currently offer a mileage allowance of 30 pence per mile. Take-up of this current offer has been minimal. Therefore we are proposing to;

- 1) Increase the current Parental Transport Allowance to all families to the current HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) business rate of 45 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles, followed by 25 pence per mile. This would only be offered where there are no available seats in existing transport provision contracted by the Local Authority, and would be reviewed on a yearly basis; and
- 2) Introduce an enhanced Parental Transport Allowance to parents/carers whose children have been assessed as part of their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as requiring additional support to access transport, due to their special educational needs (for example an escort or medical escort). This proposed amendment would be offered to sole-occupancy travellers from September 2018.

Impact of the proposal

The promotion of a Parental Transport Allowance allows a more family centred approach to transporting children to school, reducing stress and daily changes in requirement, empowering families to control their travel provision. It may also provide sufficient funding for families to acquire their own vehicle if they currently do not own a car.

It would be cost effective for the council and would make further savings in terms of transport arrangements. If 50 per cent of families take up a parental transport allowance, the reduction in the current overspend would be in the region of £750,000.

In addition to these proposals, we are asking for any other ideas on how to save money on the home to school transport budget.

Home to School and College Transport Survey

What is the main way that you are involved with home to school transport in North Yorkshire? (Please Tick)

- I am a parent / carer
- I am a young person
- I am responding on behalf of a school or College
- I am a transport provider
- I am responding on behalf of an organisation
- Other

If "Other" please describe what your involvement is with Home to School transport

Please tell us what you think about the proposals (tick appropriately):

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Removal of the FREE Transport statement for SEND Post-16 to 18 students with an EHCP from September 2018, to bring it in line with mainstream transport arrangements					
Recognise SEND Post-19 students as adults in education, and identify unmet transport need in line with Health and Adult Services social care assessment.					
Increase Parental Transport Allowance to 45p per mile when no other transport option is available.					
Promote parental transport allowance to SEND sole occupancy provision with a realistic enhancement to meet the young person(s) transport needs.					

If these changes go ahead, I think that (tick appropriately):

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
More parents/carers will arrange their own transport provision.					
More families will face financial hardship.					

Are there any other comments you would like to make about the proposals or their likely impact?

Have you any ideas about other ways in which the council could make savings from the home to school transport budget.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these proposal and to tell us your views. Please submit your views by Monday 2 April 2018.

Once completed please send your responses to :

**Central Admin Team, SB110
North Yorkshire County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL7 8AE**