

Council in 'listening mode' as Post-16 educational transport and home to school transport policy consultation starts

A public consultation [launches today](#) to hear the views of parents and residents on how Buckinghamshire Council can continue to improve its educational transport policy.

The consultation forms part of a review into the Council's overall Home to School Transport Policy and associated Post-16 Transport Policy Statement, following the changes made after the previous review of the policy in 2018/19.

Buckinghamshire's Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement set out how the Council provides transport to schools and other educational settings for 0 – 19 year olds and up to 25 years for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The current Post-16 Transport Policy Statement applies a charge to families of 16–18 year old students with SEND who receive Council educational transport, as a contribution towards the overall cost of transport.

The charges for this transport for the current academic year 2020/21 have been paused due to the impact of Coronavirus; however this is an 'exceptional' decision, meaning that the charging element of the Policy Statement is set to resume in September 2021 for the academic year 2021/22.

The consultation launched today gives families a choice of three potential options to consider for how educational transport for eligible students aged 16–19 with SEND can be organised and paid for. These options are:

- Families receiving Council transport using the current distance banded model of charging, with some improvements;
- Families having a choice of either receiving a sum of money paid directly to them to make their own transport arrangements (known as a personal transport budget), or paying an annual fee to receive Council transport;
- Families who have post-16 SEND students who are eligible for transport would be offered a personal transport budget; Council transport would be offered in exceptional circumstances for an annual fee.

The Council is also asking for views on proposals to update the content of the Policy and Statement by providing clarification and more detail to some areas. This aims to provide clearer information and guidance to students and families so they can make informed choices about their school transport.

The engagement and public consultation process

The public consultation runs for eight weeks, closing on 7 December 2020. Ahead of the consultation, the Council has talked with parent groups and other key stakeholders to understand their views as well as taking into account all feedback received over the last 12 months.

Anita Cranmer, Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, said: "We are committed to supporting our children and young people to have access to educational opportunities at the setting that's right for them, and a key part of that is assisting families to make informed choices about their educational transport.

“Although this review will not make major changes to our overall Home to School Transport Policy, by reviewing the Policy and the Post 16 Transport Statement now, we can make improvements that incorporate the feedback we have received up to this point.

“We also want to give young people and families of students who are aged 16–18 with special educational needs and disabilities some options to consider for how transport will be arranged and paid for from September 2021.

“Personal transport budgets have been in existence for some time, particularly in adult care services, but their use is now growing in school transport in many areas across the UK. When you consider the huge amount of choice, freedom and flexibility that personal transport budgets provide for families, we wanted to include these as part of the options in the consultation, giving families a good range of choice.

“We are very much in listening mode at the moment, so if you'd like to help shape our future policy for educational transport, please go to the consultation web page and take part. We really do want to hear your views.”

To find out more and take part in the consultation, go to the consultation web page: yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/schools/htst-2021-consultation