

Changes to travel assistance policy for pupils in Coventry with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

A consultation

Consultation period – 24 November 2014 – 23 January 2015

Please reply to this consultation through our online survey which can be found at:

www.coventry.gov.uk/SENDtravelsurvey2014 This document tells you about the changes that are being proposed and how you can take part in the consultation. Further information, including the proposed new policy can be viewed at www.coventry.gov.uk/SENDtravelconsultation

Background

Every Local Authority has to provide travel assistance for pupils based on a number of specific criteria. These include the distance from their home to the nearest suitable school, the age of the pupil and whether they have any special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Department for Education gives us guidance on what we must provide by law, but we do not receive dedicated funding to provide it. At the moment, the City Council is providing a service which is above the legal minimum but in the current financial climate, we can no longer afford to do this.

The current situation

The City Council currently has two travel assistance policies; one for pupils with no special needs and one for pupils with special needs. The eligibility criteria for these policies are different and we are proposing to align elements of the eligibility criteria and have them in one policy.

This will mean there will be changes to the eligibility for travel assistance for some pupils with special education needs and disabilities.

At the moment, approximately 1000 children and young people qualify for some form of travel assistance (minibuses, taxis or personal travel budgets) under the revised proposals, an estimated 270 under 16's would no longer be eligible for any assistance and an estimated 65 post 16s may still be eligible but would be charged for any transport they received. (The reason this is estimated is because an assessment of eligibility based on needs of the child would need to take place to determine who does receive assistance)

Limiting the impact of these changes

For all pupils of statutory school age (5-16) there will still be an opportunity within the policy for their travel assistance needs to be met with support if their special need or disability means that they require this.

If travel assistance is turned down, then a new appeal process is being introduced with a panel to hear a parent or carers appeal.

We have invested in additional ‘travel trainers’ who can help those young people who can be supported to develop their independent travel skills so they can travel without support.

The legal requirements relating to additional support for travel for pupils in families on low income will apply for SEND pupils as they do currently for mainstream pupils.

The detail of the changes being proposed

The table below summarises the changes to our travel assistance policies. We are aligning our SEND travel assistance policies to meet the legal minimum of our duties to provide travel assistance.

Current	Change	Future
Separate mainstream and SEND travel assistance policies	Aligning the policies	One policy
Different distance criteria for eligibility	Use same distance criteria	Eligibility automatic over 2 miles for up to 8 years, over 3 miles for over 8 years
SEND early years pupils eligible for transport. No mainstream early years transport provided	Align eligibility to statutory requirements	No early years transport or travel assistance provided
SEND post 16 transport provided free of charge, no transport for mainstream post 16	Align policies	No automatic eligibility post 16, (except for severe learning disabilities) those eligible will be charged the cost of a bus pass

What are the impacts of these changes?

The table below gives an indication of the impacts we expect this policy change to have on numbers of pupils. As we know that the nature of some special education needs and disabilities means that some pupils will always need some form of travel assistance, we have assumed that only half of all pupils will be affected by the policy change.

Type of pupil	Change	Estimated Impact (at 50% of cohort)
All Pupils living under 1 mile from school	No change	No change
Pupils living between 1-2 miles of school and aged under 8 years	No automatic eligibility	35 pupils affected
Pupils living 2 or more miles from school and aged under 8 (or those over 8 living over 3 miles from school)	No change	No change
Pupils living 1-3 miles and aged over 8	No automatic eligibility	110 pupils
Pre-school / early years	Cease transport entirely	60 children affected
Post 16 pupils with SEND attending school	Cease assistance except for pupils with severe learning disabilities	40 pupils no longer eligible, these pupils to be charged for provision
Post 16 pupils with SEND attending college		25 pupils no longer eligible, 25 pupils to be charged for provision
Introduce charging towards cost of all post 16 travel assistance	Charging	65 pupils (accounted for in post 16 above)
Total		270 / 65 charged

Responding to this consultation

Everyone is asked to respond via the online survey (whether you attend a meeting or not). The questions on the survey are:

- How will this proposal affect you?
- If you have any comments on the current proposal or alternative suggestions, please write them in the space provided below
- What impact do you think the proposal could have for different groups of people (please consider age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion and belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation)?

The survey will also ask for some demographic information so that we can be sure of responses and issues being raised by all sections of our community.

You can give your feedback at meetings which will be held in some special schools and other locations as follows

[venues to be confirmed]]

Date	Time	Location
Tues 2 December	11.00am – 12.30pm	
Weds 3 December	10.00am – 12noon	
Weds 10 December	10.00am – 12.00pm	
Tues 6 January	3.30pm – 6.30pm	
Weds 7 January	1.00pm – 3.00pm	
Thurs 8 January	10:00am – 12.00pm	
Mon 12 January	10.30am – 12.30pm	
Weds 14 January	10.30am – 12.30pm	

What will happen next?

Following this consultation, views will be considered and a paper will go to the City Council's Cabinet in 2015 to make recommendations about the future policy. The paper and the policy changes proposed at that stage will be informed by the results of this consultation.

Results of the consultation will be published on the City Council website when available on the consultation web page.

Implementation

If policy changes are agreed, then they will be implemented with effect from 1 September 2015.

Responding to this consultation in writing

We would prefer an online response to our questionnaire (see the links at the start of the document), but if you are unable to respond online you may respond in writing to:

SEND Travel Assistance consultation
 Room 238, Civic Centre 1
 Earl Street, Coventry, CV1 5RS