
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

DATE: 13 February 2009

SUBJECT: PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S POLICY FOR THE PROVISION OF 16+ TRANSPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Board to consult on changes to the present Home to School/College Transport Policy.

Background Information

2. The provision of free home to school travel for the 16+ age group remains as a discretionary item within the current Home to School/College Transport Policy.
3. The paper proposes amending the policy resulting in the removal of entitlement to all for free 16+ travel to bring Leeds into line with the majority of other Local Authorities. It is anticipated that these measures would eventually result in savings of £1,200,000.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The Executive Board is asked to:
 - Agree to a period of formal consultation with stakeholders involved in 16+ transport that will enable these provisions to be withdrawn by September 2009.
 - Note that a further report on the outcome of the consultation process will be submitted to the Executive Board in May 2009 for their consideration.

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Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL

Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in (Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Executive Board to consult on changes to the Home to School/College Transport Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 In order to seek further improvements in the efficiency of provision for home to school transport, Education Leeds has reviewed the discretionary provisions contained within the Home to School Transport Policy.

2.2 The majority of the expenditure on home to school transport is related to the discharge of statutory duties placed upon the Authority by the Education & Inspections Act 2006. There are however major areas of discretionary spending which could be withdrawn or scaled back in order to target resources on widening participation and improving student outcomes.

2.3 This paper therefore identifies the current provision of non-statutory free travel to Schools and Colleges at age 16+ as being one such area of significant

expenditure and seeks the permission of the Board to begin a period of public consultation with the intention that free home to school/college transport at age 16+ should be withdrawn.

3.0 **KEY ISSUE**

3.1 The cost of 16+ travel in Leeds is approximately £1.2 million for the issue of Zero Fare passes alone and provides free travel for approximately 5800 mainstream learners who satisfy eligibility criteria contained within the current policy. Passes are not issued to those who live less than three miles from school or college, this distance being measured using the nearest available walking route. Free travel provided on a discretionary basis can be legally withdrawn but must be withdrawn simultaneously for learners in 6th forms and those attending Colleges of Further Education.

3.2 Leeds wishes to adopt a policy which is consistent with those of regional neighbours and of Authorities nationally who are no longer provide free travel at 16+ for journeys between home and mainstream schools with 6th forms and to Colleges of Further Education.

3.3 These proposals will not affect learners provided with free travel who have special transport needs and learning difficulties under the terms of the existing policy and Leeds will continue to fund these provisions.

3.4 Mainstream post-16 students from very low-income families will continue to qualify for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), an element of which is designed to go towards the cost of travel to and from school or college. Parents can also claim Child Benefit for full-time students until their 20th birthday.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Legislation requires that learners at 16+ are provided with parity of provision whether they are on the roll of school 6th forms or at Colleges of Further Education.

4.2 Learners are provided with either a Zero Fare SchoolCard, which enables them to travel free of charge on "ordinary" bus and train services, or with a Zero Fare Boarding Card for them to travel free on contracted bus services. The Authority is therefore incurring expenditure in buying school bus passes and also a proportion of the cost of providing contract bus services to meet the demand for 16+ travel. These provisions are entirely discretionary and attract no grant funding from Government.

4.3 It would be necessary to provide protection of free travel rights for those learners currently entitled to free travel who are in year one of a two year course. The projected savings of £1,200,000 would not therefore be fully realised until the end of the academic year 2010.

5.0 **PROPOSAL**

5.1 It is proposed that a period of consultation with stakeholders, up to the end of March 2009, is undertaken with a view to implementing the following proposal:

- To withdraw free transport currently provided for 16-19 year olds, by September 2009.

Identified stakeholders include school governing bodies, Headteachers, college principals, diocesan education authorities, ward councillors, youth council, learning skills council, careers service, Metro, and transport providers.

6.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Board is asked to:

- i). Approve commencement of a consultation process from the 23 February 2009 and ending on the 03 April 2009 on the proposal to withdraw 16+ discretionary provision.
- ii). Note that a further report on the outcome of the consultation process will be submitted to the Executive Board in May 2009.

Background Papers

None.