

Children and Young People's Transport Policy: Outcome of consultation on proposed changes to transport assistance for post-16 learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Date: 16th October 2024

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The council has a statutory duty to provide home to school transport assistance for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) of statutory school age. Whilst it is a parent's responsibility to make their own transport arrangements for young people in post-16 education, the authority has continued to provide substantial discretionary assistance for students with SEND. This has included transporting students either in council fleet vehicles or by contracting private hire firms to transport students.

The number of post 16 young people living in Leeds with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 27% between July 2020 and July 2024, resulting in a 33% increase in applications for home to school transport assistance over the same period. Based on historic trends and birth rates alone, it is projected the number of post-16 young people living in Leeds with an EHCP will rise by a further 35% by 2030 putting an unsustainable pressure on the council's transport services and budgets. Recent analysis indicates that post-16 SEND transport assistance costs the local authority approximately £4m -£4.5m to transport approximately 815 post-16 learners (based on the 2023/24 academic year data). The current model of provision of assistance can also be restrictive and limiting for some families who have transport arrangements decided for them.

In supporting the strategic aims set out in the Children and Young People's Plan, and within the context of the council's current financial challenge, a Children and Families directorate project team undertook a review of our current Children's Transport Policy. The review also considered policies of comparator local authorities to establish a range of potential proposals that, if implemented, aim to support independence for our young people and their families, and maximise the efficient use of available council resources.

Following the decision of the Council's Executive Board on 16th June 2024, a public consultation was held between 24th June – 23rd July 2024 on proposed changes to transport assistance for post-16 learners with SEND. The proposals aimed to encourage as many young people with SEND as possible to develop the ability to travel independently in preparation for adulthood and open travel

options which help some young people become more independent, such as accessing public transport with training and support provided by the Council's Independent Travel Training Team. This report, and its associated appendices, provides details of the consultation, analysis of the responses and recommendations to the Executive Board of proposed changes to the current Children's Transport Policy including it being retitled Children and Young People's Transport Policy, to be effective from September 2025.

Recommendations

Executive Board is recommended to:

- a) Note in general terms, the content of this report.
- b) Note the outcome of a consultation exercise agreed at a previous meeting of Executive Board.
- c) Approve in principle the proposed Children and Young People's Transport Policy, (October 2024), at Appendix 3. This details how a stepped model of transport assistance would be offered to eligible young people with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) in post-16 education. Transport assistance would in future be made available on the following basis, depending on eligibility and the level of transport need, assessed against the proposed policy:
 - i) limiting post-16 transport assistance to learners with SEND, living 3 or more miles from their education setting
 - ii) provide Independent Travel Training and a free bus pass (or equivalent cost) for a young person who is able to travel independently or could make the journey to their learning setting on public transport accompanied by an adult as necessary.
 - iii) issue a Personal Transport Allowance for post-16 learners with SEND, as set out in paragraph 8 (b)
 - iv) the consideration of transport assistance for applications made against the exceptional circumstance criteria set out in the proposed Children and Young People's Transport Policy (October 2024) at Appendix 3 and detailed in paragraphs 24-25 of this report.
- d) Note that implementation would be with effect from the commencement of the new academic year (September 2025) and that transitional arrangements would apply to the application of the new policy, as detailed in paragraph 22.
- e) Note that a Children and Families Scrutiny Working Group meeting took place on 24 September 2024 to discuss the recommendations detailed in this report. Due to timing associated with the respective deadlines for publishing Executive Board papers and the scheduled meetings of the Scrutiny Board (required to approve the notes of the outcome of the Scrutiny Working Group) a supplementary document will be provided to Executive Board (marked for ease as Appendix 2), this document will follow the initial publication of Executive Board papers.
- f) Note that following Executive Board's consideration of the draft policy, any further amendments to the draft policy would be taken in accordance with existing delegations by the Director of Children and Families.

What is this report about?

- 1 Leeds City Council currently offers discretionary transport assistance to full-time post-16 students with SEND and to post-19 learners with SEND under the following eligibility criteria set out in the existing Children's Transport Policy (section 7):

"Students aged 16 to 25 who have a recognised learning difficulty or disability will receive assistance if:

(a) they are the subject of a statement of SEN (Special Educational Needs) or an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC) and attend the school named in that statement or EHC plan; or

(b) they attend the nearest government-funded college of further education in Leeds or a neighbouring local authority that offers the course of their choice; and

(c) they live more than three miles from that school or college, when measured by the nearest available walking route; and

(d) they attend school or college for at least twelve hours of guided learning each week of the academic year. "

- 2 The Children and Families Directorate 2024/25 transport budget for 2024/25 is £22.2m, a net increase of £4.2m compared to £18m in 2023/24. This includes transport for pupils with SEND, Children who are 'looked after' (CLA) and mainstream school bus services. In terms of the budget increase, £6.1m was added to the transport budget for growth based on forecast trends at the time. This was then reduced by £2m of savings targets, resulting in a net budget increase of £4.2m. Due to a continued increase in demand, Month 4 financial projections are reporting an overspend against the 2024/25 transport budget of £3.75m, mainly on transport for pupils with SEND.
- 3 At the end of the 2023-24 academic year, there were 3573 (July 2024) children and young people accessing transport support at an average cost of £6,000 per child or young person, which has surpassed the forecasted end of year figure of 3380 (a forecasted increase of 6%). In-school-year applications have increased by 18% year on year, and an overall 15% year on year forecast is now anticipated. There has also been a 25% increase in transport awards with a passenger assistant due to a significant increase in complex behavioural and/or medical issues.
- 4 The Children and Families Directorate has historically provided support to a small number of post-16 and post-19 students with SEND. This has included transporting students either in council fleet vehicles or by contracting private hire firms to transport students. In the context of rising demand, the provision of assistance in this way is restrictive and limiting for some families, and financially unsustainable for the council.
- 5 The Council is committed to encouraging as many young people with SEND as possible to develop the ability to travel independently in preparation for adulthood, rather than having to rely on restrictive council-organised transport arrangements. To assist with this aim, the Council's award-winning Independent Travel Training Team encourages and supports as many young people with SEND as possible to undertake Independent Travel Training (ITT) to enable them to use public transport with confidence, developing their skills of independent travel in preparation for adulthood. The ITT team has recently been significantly expanded to enable more children

and young people with SEND to benefit from the training and support provided by the team, with thousands already trained to travel with confidence since the team was established.

- 6 Following the decision of the Council's Executive Board on 16 June 2024, a public consultation was held between 24 June – 23 July 2024 on a range of proposed changes to transport assistance for post-16 learners with SEND.
- 7 The public consultation centred on a range of options and gave young people, their families, and partners across the city, the opportunity to have their say and provide essential feedback to enable an in-depth understanding of any possible impact the proposals may have on them and on other services, such as Adult Social Care.
- 8 The consultation focused on four proposals:

- (a) Proposal 1: Limiting post-16 transport assistance for post-16 learners with SEND, living 3 or more miles from their education setting.

Under the current Children's Transport Policy, if you are a school pupil aged eight to sixteen and meet the eligibility criteria for transport assistance, this support can be requested if you live three or more miles from the nearest qualifying school. This proposal is to apply the same criteria to post-16 learners applying for transport assistance.

- (b) Proposal 2: Offer of a Personal Transport Allowance for eligible post-16 learners with SEND.

Currently, most post-16 students with SEND who are in receipt of transport assistance are transported in council fleet vehicles or by contracting private hire firms. Under the proposed arrangements, most post-16 learners with SEND would instead receive a yearly flat-rate Personal Transport Allowance (PTA) based on distance from home to their learning setting, to enable them to make their own travel arrangements, as follows:

- Between 3 and 10 miles – £1,000 per year
- Between 10.01 and 20 miles – £2,000 per year
- Over 20.01 miles – £3,000 per year

- (c) Proposal 3: Introduce a charge as a contribution towards the high cost of council-organised transport arrangements for post-16 learners, excluding post-19, with SEND.

It may be the case that, due to the complexity of a learner's needs, or because it is assessed to be the most cost-effective option, council-organised transport arrangements, such as a taxi or a minibus, are required for some learners.

Under this proposal, all eligible students who receive Council-organised transport would contribute to the cost. The proposed contribution is £300 per year, the same as the price of a yearly (Zero Fare) School Bus Pass.

- (d) Proposal 4: Transport assistance is limited to post-16 learners only, with eligibility for post-19 learners removed.

The local authority does not have a statutory obligation to provide transport assistance for post-19 learners. The DfE states that where learners over 19 would be eligible for transport assistance via adult services, then they are not to be charged for education transport assistance and, therefore, if assistance is provided it must be free of charge.

It should be noted that proposals 2 and 3 are mutually exclusive, i.e. one of either proposals could be introduced (in conjunction with or separate to proposals 1 and 4) but not together.

- 9 Overall, Proposal 3 had the highest level of agreement, with a quarter of respondents (24%) agreeing with the proposal and 61% disagreeing. Proposal 2 had a similar level of support, with 23% agreeing and 62% disagreeing. Proposal 4 had the lowest level of agreement, with 12% of respondents agreeing with the proposal and 80% disagreeing. Whilst the agreement levels are as set out, it should be noted that a majority of respondents disagreed with the potential changes. Further details are provided later in the report setting out in detail the consultation undertaken and the consultation responses.
- 10 Although proposal 3 was the least opposed of the proposals, it has been decided not to recommend its implementation given the small projected saving of £80,000 per annum and the administrative resource that would be required to administer the charge.
- 11 Although, based on the existing cohort of post-19 learners, it would achieve an estimated saving of £342,000 per annum, given the strength of opposition to the removal of transport assistance for post-19 learners with SEND, it has not been recommended to proceed with implementation of proposal 4.

The case for recommending implementation of Proposal 1

- 12 It is estimated that implementation of proposal 1 would achieve a saving of £63,000 per annum.
- 13 Section 7 of the current Children's Transport Policy already restricts transport assistance eligibility for college students aged 16 to 25 who have a recognised learning difficulty or disability to those living more than 3 miles from that college. Implementation of this proposal would mean the 3-mile policy also applies to students attending post-16 provision at a school or specialist inclusive learning centre (SILC).
- 14 In addition, under the current Children's Transport Policy, if you are a school pupil aged eight to sixteen and meet the eligibility criteria, transport assistance can be requested if you live 3 or more miles from the nearest qualifying school. Again, this proposal extends the same criteria to post-16 learners applying for transport assistance.
- 15 Costs incurred for short distances will be lower than for longer journeys. However, recognising that the cost of transport can be an issue for families, the council's Post-16 Transport Policy Statement provides information about the transport support available for students. This includes, where appropriate, details about Independent Travel Training, enabling learners to use public transport with confidence, and the 16-19 Bursary Fund, aimed at targeting support to those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation in education and training.

16 Vulnerable students, such as students with SEND claiming Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance could get a Bursary up to £1200 for a full academic year. In addition, the council would continue to consider providing support on a discretionary basis in exceptional circumstances, as detailed at paragraphs 24 and 25.

The case for recommending implementation of Proposal 2.

17 Proposal 2 offers an estimated saving of £800,000 per annum whilst allowing families the flexibility to make their own transport arrangements that best meet their own individual needs and circumstances. By contrast, implementing proposal 3 would maintain the status quo of council-organised arrangements and is estimated to offer only a negligible saving of £80,000 per annum.

18 By implementing Proposal 2, families would be able to use the Personal Transport Allowance (PTA) to choose the most suitable travel option for the young person, such as driving them to school/college, or arranging shared transport with other young people attending the same school/college.

19 During the consultation period, some young people told us that it was important to them that they felt confident to travel on their own, that they like to travel with people they know and trust, or that they enjoyed travelling with their ITT buddy. A PTA may open travel options which help some young people become more independent, such as using public transport, with or without Independent Travel Training, or by allowing a family to arrange a travel assistant or friend to cycle, wheel or walk along with the young person.

20 It is recognised that a PTA may not be appropriate for all young people. In exceptional cases, the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis in exceptional circumstances, as detailed at paragraphs 24 and 25. In addition, if it is deemed that the council can provide transport that meets the needs of a young person at better value for money than providing a PTA, then this would be offered.

21 Although it is estimated that a saving of £342,000 per annum could be achieved, as the option with the least support and the most opposition, as demonstrated by the consultation responses received, it has not been recommended at this time to proceed with Proposal 4, which was to limit transport assistance to post-16 learners only, with eligibility for post-19 learners removed.

Transitional Arrangements

22 It was made clear throughout the consultation that should any proposal and policy changes be approved by Executive Board, these would have a phased implementation, in that the new criteria would be applied to new applications received for the 2025/26 academic year onwards, or where any learner circumstances change (e.g., moving house, moving settings, change in individual needs/disabilities) and a new application for transport assistance for the 2025/26 academic year onwards is received.

23 The Transitional Arrangements would provide time to assist families with decision-making, with transport discussions beginning earlier, starting in Year 9 as part of the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) review process. This would provide families with a clear understanding of the available transport options and help set realistic expectations for post-16 travel assistance.

Proposed exceptional circumstances criteria for transport assistance.

- 24 All applications for transport assistance would continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Children and Families Transport Team against the eligibility criteria set out within the proposed Children and Young People's Transport Policy (October 2024). This would consider the needs of the individual young person and would be informed by a range of factors including additional need, location of setting, transport options etc. For post-16 and post-19 learners with SEND, the circumstances under which assistance would be considered is set out at Section 7 of the policy.
- 25 Under the proposed stepped model set out in this report's recommendations, the usual offer for learners unable to travel on public transport, or unable to travel independently through ITT, would be the award of a PTA. This would also be the case for young people who fall outside of the proposed Children and Young People's Transport Policy eligibility criteria, but who do meet the following exceptional circumstances criteria:
- i. due to the complexity of a young person's medical needs and/or SEND
 - ii. because it is assessed by the council to be the most efficient use of council resources
 - iii. Where it is considered by the council to be in the best interests of the young learner (e.g., where there is a safeguarding risk, or it is not reasonably practicable to access education if no arrangements were made)
 - iv. Particular circumstances around the availability/logistics of independent travel options

Council-organised transport (e.g. a taxi or minibus) would also be considered for all young people eligible for assistance and who also meet the exceptional circumstances criteria. However, this type of award would be subject to review and agreement by the Children and Families' Transport Panel.

Independent Travel Training (ITT)

- 26 Throughout the consultation it was also reinforced that regardless of the potential for future transport assistance policy changes, the Council remains committed to continuing to encourage and support as many young people with SEND as possible to undertake ITT to enable them to use public transport with confidence, developing their skills of independent travel in preparation for adulthood. Underlining this commitment, the ITT team has recently been significantly expanded to enable more children and young people with SEND to benefit from the training and support provided by the team.
- 27 ITT is for eligible young people and adults who live in Leeds who have SEND and who attend school, college, or an adult day centre. The team also provide travel training to children who are looked after. ITT enables a young person or adult to learn the skills needed to make the journey between home and school or college independently by foot, bus or train and involves them being allocated a dedicated Travel Buddy who will assist them in developing their skills and confidence, generally over a period of weeks. Eventually, the young person will be able to safely travel independently to and from school or college.
- 28 The ITT Team previously won the Children and Young People Now Learning Award for its ITT scheme and, as a recognised national leader, they regularly deliver a level 2 'Teaching Independent Travel' accreditation to other Local Authorities, Transport for London, schools, and colleges. The ITT team have also recently expanded the level 2 offer internally, to give council

colleagues who work with young people the opportunity to expand their skills to support independent travel. The initial offer is for Life Coaches, Social work staff and Early help colleagues.

29 Since 2009 the ITT Team have enabled over 2000 Leeds children and young people to achieve independence with travel on their journeys between home and school, SILC, or college.

Some ITT testimonials:

“My daughter was a little bit shaky to start with but as she progressed, she became more and more confident, and she’s really taken it on board and thoroughly enjoys travelling independently. My daughter refuses to go in the car with me now and much prefers to use the bus!”

“Travel training made me feel more confident and more grown up and similar to others. The most exciting thing I’ve done is travel to places I wanted to visit on my own like Headingley Stadium”.

“The ITT project has been brilliant to my daughter and the whole family all together. I didn’t think that I would ever be able to let my daughter walk alone to school but after the completion of the training I am more at ease now. My daughter’s confidence has grown and I am so proud of her achievement, I can’t thank her travel buddy enough for the support and care she has provided to my daughter.”

“I found the project helpful, and I enjoyed the training on the bus to get to college and how to cross the roads safely. I was very nervous about travelling to college using public transport, but after the training I am now capable of travelling to and from college on my own.”

What impact will this proposal have?

30 A full impact assessment has been carried out. Through consultation we gave families the opportunities to meet face to face and provide open narrative responses to questions, and we specifically asked families to tell us what impact the proposals would have on them.

31 Information and feedback gathered throughout the consultation has informed a full Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) impact assessment (included at Appendix 1) and has informed the recommendations of this report.

32 The EDCI screening indicated the proposals would have implications for the following groups?

Service users / customers	Yes	Legal / regulatory requirements	Yes
Council staff	Yes	Contracts / procurement	Yes
Partners	Yes	Capital programme	No
Other LCC services / stakeholders	No	Work location / building	No
Information technology & IDS capacity	No	Equalities	Yes

33 The overall impact of these proposals is to achieve a reduction of in-year and future budget pressures whilst still maintaining a discretionary transport offer to full-time post-16 students with SEND.

34 Finance, Legal and Equalities colleagues have been fully involved in the review process and provided support and guidance on financial, legislative and equality issues and implications.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 35 Although the provision of post-16 transport is non-statutory, it is recognised that these proposed changes could create barriers to education for some post-16 learners with SEND, and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Independent Travel Training will support some young people to become more independent, however, it is acknowledged that this is not appropriate for all young people with SEND.
- 36 It is recognised that proceeding with these proposals would result in scaling back of the discretionary offer available to post-16 learners with SEND, however, in the context of a need to make significant financial savings, the proposals will help ensure that available resources are targeted to enable the most vulnerable learners to continue to receive assistance and that, wherever possible, the opportunity to help a young person travel independently is made available.
- 37 Both ITT and PTAs may open opportunities to use more sustainable travel options, such as using public transport, or by allowing a family to arrange a travel assistant or friend to cycle, wheel or walk with the young person. Around 15 percent of post-16 learners eligible for transport assistance already travel to their learning setting by bus, with a recently expanded ITT delivery team working with young people to increase the number who are able to travel independently.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All wards.

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 38 A significant overspend of the children's transport budget in 2022/23 and 2023/24 triggered the need to establish of a cross-service project group to oversee the delivery of a budget saving plan. The project group is supported by the Transformation Team, and includes representation from Finance, SEN and Learning Inclusion, CEL (Civic Enterprise Leeds) Transport Services, and Assets and Access. Early planning showed that, due to demand and rising costs, it does not appear possible to eliminate the overspend without proposing some changes to discretionary elements of the current Children's Transport Policy arrangements.
- 39 In supporting the strategic aims set out in the Children and Young Peoples Plan, and within the context of the council's current financial challenge, a Children and Families directorate project team undertook a review of our current Children's Transport Policy. The review also considered policies of comparator local authorities to establish a range of potential proposals that, if implemented, aim to support independence for our children, young people, and their families, and maximise the efficient use of available council resources.
- 40 The review of comparator local authorities established that the proposed stepped model outlined in this report's recommendations would bring us into closer alignment with many other council's post-16 transport arrangements who either issue PTAs and/or charges for transport assistance. For example:
- i. Kirklees CC 2024-25 post-16 transport statement states that a post-16 personal transport payment is the usual award for eligible learners. Payment bands are set at similar rates to those proposed for Leeds.

- ii. Bradford CC charge eligible students £370.00 per year for council-organised transport or offer personal transport budgets based on a 'daily-rate' of £7.90 per day.
- iii. North Yorkshire CC charge eligible students up to £792.00 per academic year for dedicated transport from/to defined pick-up points. Eligible students may also be offered a mileage allowance of 20 pence per mile for one return journey per day. For students with additional medical or mobility needs an enhanced parental allowance may be available.
- iv. Wakefield CC offer a range of assistance to eligible learners including ITT; a mileage expense contribution; a PTA; or- in exceptional circumstances only – assisted transport (taxi, minibus etc) at a charge to families of up to £684 per academic year.
- v. East Riding of Yorkshire CC offer both personal transport budgets and tailored transport support, subject to a charge of up to £660 per academic year.
- vi. In terms of other core cities, all of Birmingham CC's post-16 transport provision for eligible learners, including personal transport budgets, is subject to a charge of up to £1028 per academic year. Liverpool CC's options for eligible learners includes personal transport budgets set at £3 per day plus 45 pence per mile for two journeys per day within Liverpool and Bristol offer eligible learners either a bus/train pass, ITT, or a personal travel budget.

- 41 Executive Board at its 19 June 2024 meeting approved recommendations to consult on a range of proposals for post-16 SEND transport assistance and agree the findings of the consultation be used to prepare recommendations for a new post-16 SEND transport offer.
- 42 The project team has worked closely with colleagues in Consultation and Engagement to ensure the best standards of consultation were followed. This is reflected in the consultation findings, with 97% of those who engaged via the consultation survey responding that they found the consultation information provided useful or very useful.
- 43 A public consultation took place between 24 June 2024 and 23 July 2024 on the four identified proposals and was managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and local good practice, with previous consultations on proposed changes to the existing Children's Transport Policy providing valuable lessons to inform the approach.
- 44 The consultation sought the views of children and young people; parents/carers; staff and governors of Special Inclusion Learning Centres (SILCs), primary and secondary schools, and post-16 providers; and other stakeholders.
- 45 To maximise stakeholder engagement a variety of consultation methods were used, including email communications and an online survey. In-person and online public engagement sessions were held for parents/carers and other interested stakeholders, which gave attendees an opportunity to discuss the proposals with representatives from the council's Assets and Access; Passenger Transport; and the SEND and Learning Inclusion Teams. These sessions were chaired by Children and Families' Deputy Director for Learning.
- 46 Details about the consultation were also sent to all parents and carers of children and young people with either an EHCP assessment in progress or an active EHCP in school years 9 and above, Leeds primary, secondary, SILC, and post-16 learning settings, as well as to out-of-area independent post-16 learning providers accessed by some Leeds children and young people with

SEND. Flyers raising awareness of the consultation were distributed by Passenger Transport in-house fleet drivers to all children and young people accessing transport assistance.

47 In addition, engagement with young learners aged 14 to 19, designed by the Voice & Influence Team, has been carried out by the Voice and Influence champions within four separate education settings. Flyers were distributed at the Leeds SEND Next Steps event and at a Parent Carers Forum meeting, both of which took place during the consultation period. Information was available via the Leeds City Council website, the Leeds Local Offer website, via a Press Release, and through social media platforms.

48 The Executive Member for Children and Families was briefed, and a link to the consultation on the proposed changes was sent to all elected members.

49 During the consultation period, a total of 306 responses were received offering views on the four proposals:

(a) Proposal 1: Limiting post-16 transport assistance for post-16 learners with SEND, living 3 or more miles from their education setting.

(b) Proposal 2: Offer of a Personal Transport Allowance for eligible post-16 learners with SEND.

Under the proposed arrangements, post-16 learners with SEND would receive a yearly flat-rate Personal Transport Allowance (PTA) based on distance from home to their learning setting, to enable them to make their own travel arrangements, as follows:

- Between 3 and 10 miles – £1,000 per year
- Between 10.01 and 20 miles – £2,000 per year
- Over 20.01 miles – £3,000 per year

(c) Proposal 3: Introduce a charge as a contribution towards the high cost of council-organised transport arrangements for post-16 learners, excluding post-19, with SEND.

Under this proposal, all eligible students who receive Council-organised transport would contribute to the cost. The proposed contribution is £300 per year, the same as the price of a yearly (Zero Fare) School Bus Pass.

(d) Proposal 4: Transport assistance is limited to post-16 learners only, with eligibility for post-19 learners removed.

50 Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree with each of the proposals using the following scale: Strongly Agree; Agree; Neither Agree or Disagree; Disagree; Strongly Disagree. An overall summary of responses to each of the proposals is set out in the table below:

Response	Proposal 1	Proposal 2	Proposal 3	Proposal 4
Strongly agree or agree	22%	23%	24%	12%
Neither agree or disagree	6%	14%	15%	8%

Strongly disagree or disagree	73%	62%	61%	80%
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- 51 A document providing a comprehensive summary of all consultation responses received during the consultation period is included as a background document to this report.
- 52 There are several broad themes which have been raised by survey respondents explaining the reasons for their level of agreement/disagreement. The comments were analysed and categorised into themes as detailed below.
- 53 A summary of the views expressed by the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with proposal 1, Limiting post-16 transport assistance for post-16 learners to those living 3 or more miles from their education setting, is set out below:
- (a) 3 miles is a reasonable distance to walk, drive, or get a taxi etc.
 - (b) Responsibility should be on the parents/carers e.g. can use benefits/other funding.
 - (c) Acknowledgement of the need for LCC to save money.
 - (d) Each case should be assessed individually/ support prioritised.
 - (e) Proposal is fair/reasonable.
- 54 A summary of the views expressed by the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with proposal 2, offer of a Personal Transport Allowance for eligible post-16 learners with SEND, is set out below:
- (a) The proposal is fair/reasonable.
 - (b) Will provide more flexibility/independence.
 - (c) Each case should be assessed individually/ support prioritised.
 - (d) Proposal is fair provided the transport is appropriate and safe.
 - (e) Acknowledge need for LCC to save money.
- 55 A summary of the views expressed by the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with proposal 3, Introduce a charge as a contribution towards the high cost of council-organised transport arrangements for post-16 learners, excluding post-19, with SEND, is set out below:
- (a) The proposal is fair/ reasonable.
 - (b) Low-income families.
 - (c) Considered in the context of additional funding support/PIP.
 - (d) Each case should be assessed individually/ support prioritised.
 - (e) Instalments/payment plan should be made available.
 - (f) Rather pay than lose the service.
- 56 A summary of the views expressed by the respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with Proposal 4: Transport assistance is limited to post-16 learners only, with eligibility for post-19 learners removed, is set out below:
- (a) Post 19 learners should be financially responsible e.g. receive benefits.
 - (b) Proposal is fair/reasonable.
 - (c) Transfer support responsibility to Social Care.

57 The table below shows the most common themes, raised by survey respondents who disagreed with a proposal, for each of the 4 proposals. A response has been included for each theme.

Proposal 1: Limiting post-16 transport assistance for post-16 learners to those living 3 or more miles from their education setting	
Theme	Service response
Many SEN learners cannot travel themselves	<p>Under the current Children's Transport Policy, if you are a school pupil aged eight to sixteen and meet the eligibility criteria, transport assistance can be requested if you live three or more miles from the nearest qualifying school. This proposal is to apply the same criteria to post-16 learners applying for transport assistance.</p> <p>Costs incurred for short distances will be lower than for longer journeys. Learners can apply for 16-19 Bursary Fund, which can be used towards the cost of post-16 transport. In addition, the council would continue to consider providing support on a discretionary basis in exceptional circumstances.</p>
Impact on working parents/carers	<p>Section 7 of the current Children's Transport Policy already restricts transport assistance eligibility for college students aged 16 to 25 who have a recognised learning difficulty or disability to those living more than 3 miles from that college. Implementation of this proposal would mean the 3-mile policy also applies to students attending post-16 provision at a school or SILC as well.</p> <p>In addition, under the current Children's Transport Policy, if you are a school pupil aged eight to sixteen and meet the eligibility criteria, transport assistance can be requested if you live three or more miles from the nearest qualifying school. Again, this proposal is to extend the same criteria to post-16 learners applying for transport assistance.</p>
Negative impact on learners' education/ attendance	<p>Recognising that the cost of transport can be an issue, the council's post-16 transport policy statement provides information about the transport support available for students. This includes, where appropriate, details about Independent Travel Training, enabling learners to use public transport with confidence, and the 16-19 Bursary Fund, aimed at targeting support to those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation in education and training.</p>
Proposal is unfair/discriminatory	<p>Under the current Children's Transport Policy, if you are a school pupil aged eight to sixteen and</p>

	<p>meet the eligibility criteria, transport assistance can be requested if you live three or more miles from the nearest qualifying school. This proposal is to apply the same criteria to post-16 learners applying for transport assistance.</p> <p>In addition, Section 7 of the current Children’s Transport Policy already restricts transport assistance eligibility for college students aged 16 to 25 who have a recognised learning difficulty or disability to those living more than 3 miles from that college. Implementation of this proposal would mean the 3-mile policy also applies to students attending post-16 provision at a school or SILC as well.</p> <p>The council would continue to consider support on a discretionary basis in exceptional circumstances.</p>
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Proposal 2: Offer of a Personal Transport Allowance for eligible post-16 learners with SEND.

Theme	Response
PTA amount won't be enough	<p>PTAs allow families to take ownership of their own transport arrangements that best meet their family’s individual needs and circumstances.</p> <p>The flat-rate PTAs proposed would provide payments of between £1,000 and £3,000 per year (prorated for part-time learners), to help families cover the cost of putting their own arrangements in place. This compares with a current average cost of £6,000 per learner for the council to put directly provided transport arrangements in place directly.</p> <p>The council will offer support in the form of Independent Travel Training for young people wherever this is appropriate. However, it is acknowledged that this will not be appropriate for some young people, and that for some families, the PTA amount may not cover the entire cost of transport for to college/ school.</p> <p>The proposed transitional arrangements (detailed at paragraph 22) would mean that any changes to policy would be phased in so that the new criteria would only apply to new transport applications for the 2025/26 academic year onwards, or from September 2025 where a learner’s circumstances have change, such as a house move or change of learning setting.</p>

	<p>This will provide time to assist families with decision-making, with transport discussions beginning earlier, starting in Year 9 as part of the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) review process. This would provide families with a clear understanding of the available transport options and help set realistic expectations for post-16 travel assistance.</p> <p>Additionally, to help manage potential logistical challenges, parents and carers would be encouraged to explore flexible working arrangements in partnership with schools and employers. In some cases, extended family members may also be able to assist, and options such as shared minibus services or carpooling could offer practical solutions. Additionally, families may be able to access alternative funding sources to supplement the PTA. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some young people with a disability may be entitled to a Personal Independence Payment (PIP), to help with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability. • Accessing up to £1,200 through the 16-19 bursary fund to support access to post-16 education. • In addition to arrangements made by the local authority, governing bodies of post-16 learning may also provide support with transport costs and transport provision. <p>Finally, the council would continue to consider council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis, in exceptional circumstances, for those who meet the Exceptional Circumstances criteria set out at paragraphs 24-25, or if this would be the most cost-effective option.</p>
<p>Impact on working parents/carers</p>	<p>Families eligible for a PTA would have the freedom to use the money however they wish to enable a young person to get to school or college.</p> <p>The funds provided could be used to put in place whatever transport arrangements work best for them, for example, purchasing a bus pass, working with schools or colleges to join up with other parents to put shared travel arrangements</p>

	<p>in place for students, paying for taxis, or to drive the young person to school or college.</p> <p>A PTA may not be appropriate for all young people. In exceptional cases, the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis for those with the most complex needs, or if this would be the most cost-effective option.</p>
Financial burden/ hardship	<p>Transport assistance for young people with SEND in post-16 learning continues to be available under the eligibility criteria set out in the proposed Children and Young People's Transport Policy.</p> <p>However, recognising that the cost of transport, even for short journeys, can be an issue, the council's post-16 transport policy statement provides information about the transport support available for students including Concessionary fares, discounts, subsidies, passes and travel cards available to young people aged 16 to 25; Independent Travel Training (ITT) to enable the young person to work towards travelling independently on public transport; and the 16-19 Bursary Fund which can be used towards the cost of post-16 transport.</p>
Many SEN learners cannot travel themselves	<p>PTAs allow families to take ownership of their own transport arrangements that best meet their family's individual needs and circumstances.</p>
Danger/ safety risk	<p>Families would be able to choose the most suitable travel option for a young person, such as driving them to school/college, or arranging shared transport with other young people attending the same school/college.</p> <p>A PTA may open travel options that help some young people to become more independent, such as using public transport, with or without some Independent Travel Training, or by allowing a family to arrange a travel assistant or friend to cycle, wheel or walk with the young person.</p> <p>It is recognised that a PTA may not be appropriate for all young people. In exceptional cases, the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis for those with the most complex needs, or if this would be the most cost-effective option.</p>

Proposal 3: Introduce a charge as a contribution towards the high cost of council-organised transport arrangements for post-16 learners, excluding post-19, with SEND.

Theme	Response	
Financial burden/ hardship	<p>It is accepted that the cost of transport, even for short journeys, can be an issue. The council's post-16 transport policy statement provides information about the transport support available for students including concessionary fares, discounts, subsidies, passes and travel cards available to young people aged 16 to 25.</p> <p>Where appropriate, Leeds City Council encourages young people with SEND to undertake ITT to enable them to use public transport with confidence.</p> <p>In exceptional cases, the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis for those with the most complex needs.</p>	
Proposal is unfair/discriminatory		
Negative impact on learners' education/ attendance		

Proposal 4: Transport assistance is limited to post-16 learners only, with eligibility for post-19 learners removed.

Theme	Response	
Negative impact on learners' education/ attendance	<p>The council's post-16 transport policy statement, updated annually, provides information about the transport support available for students to help them make appropriate transport arrangements that enable them to continue receiving education or training. Support available includes concessionary fares, discounts, subsidies, passes and travel cards available to young people aged 16 to 25.</p> <p>Where appropriate, Leeds City Council actively encourages young people with SEND to undertake ITT to enable them to use public transport with confidence.</p> <p>In exceptional cases, the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis for those with the most complex needs.</p>	
Still need support/EHCP post 19		
Penalises/ disadvantages post 19 SEN learners		
Impact on working parents/ carers	<p>There is no automatic entitlement to free home to school or college transport once a student is over compulsory school age.</p>	

	The council's post-16 transport policy statement provides information about the transport support available for students to help them make appropriate transport arrangements that enable them to continue receiving education or training.
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58 In addition to the 302 survey responses, 7 consultation email responses were also received from a range of stakeholders including: parents and carers; a ward member; a charity, Trade Unions; a campaign group; and an Education Group. Key themes raised are listed below, and a summary of all the email responses received is included in the consultation analysis background document.

- a) Distance is irrelevant for complex need.
- b) PTA must meet needs of learner.
- c) Transport must be appropriate and well equipped.
- d) Removing transport increases adult social care demand and LCC tribunals costs.
- e) Huge impact on wellbeing and financial capacity of working parents/carers.
- f) Provision should be needs based.
- g) Increased pressure on families from cuts to transport risk families being forced to surrender care of their young people to the council.
- h) Important social networks for the young people will be disrupted.
- i) There is a moral argument against these proposals, both in terms of creating barriers for SEND young people.
- j) Generally, support independent travel arrangements on the understanding that provision will still be needs based.
- k) With a large majority of SEND families coming from more deprived areas of the city, a contribution to travel would negatively impact lower-income families.
- l) The impact of removing post-19 transport would be “devastating for the life chances of post-19 learners as a result of not being able to access the education, training and preparation for adult life outcomes identified”.
- m) Removing post-19 is a breach of the rights of young adults to “access meaningful daytime activities, and to be able to access them independently as young adults without being reliant on family”.
- n) Removing transport assistance will prevent learners from attending appropriate settings, will increase social isolation and will increase their “barriers to an ordinary life”.
- o) This would be a retrograde step and detrimental to the young people.

One Union also emailed a report submitted in response to the consultation. The report presented the findings from a union-led survey, conducted amongst professionals working within specialist education provisions, as well as parents of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The survey gathered feedback regarding the provision of transport services by the local authority in comparison to those offered by the private sector, highlighting key areas of satisfaction and the concern. The report highlights a strong stakeholder preference for maintaining local authority transport services as these are considered as more efficient and consistently meeting the needs of learners and their families by offering reliable, safe, and accessible services.

59 Four public engagement sessions have been held with over 40 stakeholders attending, including parents and carers. Key issues raised in the sessions are detailed below:

- a) Significant impact on families if transport was removed, mainly due to reliance families have on the transport provided.
- b) Many families may need to give up work if transport isn't provided, leading to further financial implications.
- c) Independence is achieved from the children and young people (CYP) travelling on transport, not necessarily travelling on buses themselves.
- d) These proposals could have a significant impact on school and setting attendance – leading to further issues e.g. development.
- e) Council organised transport is preferred over private taxis or minibuses, mainly due to the reliability and convenience this brings the family. Several cases were discussed across the sessions explaining the extra lengths council-organised transport and their staff go, when compared to private sector services.
- f) Proposal 2 – how were these figures decided with the average cost of transport being circa £6,500 per child.
- g) Proposal 3 – Will adjustments for low-income families be made? Can this cost be spread across multiple payments? What happens if the family have multiple children that need transport?
- h) Have the council considered the impact on other services if the transport is removed?
- i) Have the council considered how viable different settings may be to families if the offer or transport is removed?
- j) Is there a way that ITT can be integrated better into the curriculum, as an alternative way of being provided?
- k) 3 miles is not a suitable assumption that CYP can get to school under this threshold – this is largely not the case.
- l) The council has spent a lot of money on new settings e.g. The Vine, but then these proposals may remove access for the students needing to attend as they have no other way of getting there.
- m) Have the Council also factored in the cost of the increased appeals and tribunals that will come from this, if implemented?
- n) Will there be a case-by-case approach to some of these proposals e.g. option 1, or will it be a blanket statement?

60 Engagement with young learners with SEND aged 14 to 19, designed by the Voice & Influence Team, has been carried out by the Voice and Influence champions within four separate education settings. A detailed summary of the sessions is included in the consultation analysis report included as a background document; however, many of the young people told us how important transport assistance was to them, whether it be by public transport with ITT, walking, a mini-bus, or a taxi. Some of the young people told us how they had learned to travel independently with an ITT travel buddy while others told us that it was important to them that they feel confident travelling on their own and how they liked to travel with people they know. This is a more comprehensive list of the things the young people told us are most important to them about their journey to school/college:

- a) Lots of the young people said that it was important to them that they feel safe when travelling.
- b) Some of the young people expressed how important it was to them that they could travel with people that they know and trust.
- c) Similarly, some said that travelling with/around people who are friendly, helpful and nice to them was important.

- d) Transport options that helped ensured they could arrive on time for learning was important to many of the young people who responded.
- e) A short journey time was mentioned as important by some of the young people.
- f) Others felt that the best thing about their transport arrangements was being able to travel at the same time and by the same route every day.
- g) Some of the young people felt it was important that they felt confident to travel on their own.
- h) Impact on wellbeing, social opportunities and friendships were all mentioned as important factors in regard to their transport arrangements.
- i) Some highlighted that many young people cannot manage the journey independently and would need some support.

Many of the themes captured in the engagement sessions with young people, particularly those around the importance of feeling safe and confident when travelling independently, could be addressed by an offer of ITT for eligible young people and adults with SEND. This would enable some young people to gain the skills needed to travel independently to attend school, college, or an adult day centre. For others, the proposed PTAs could offer flexibility for families to choose the most suitable travel option for a young person, such as walking or wheeling to college with a friend or travel assistant, travelling by car, or pooling PTAs to organise shared transport arrangements with other families in their area.

61 Consultation respondents were asked if they had any different proposals that could be considered, other than those raised in this consultation. 133 respondents provided comments which were analysed and categorised as shown in the background document to this report. The two most popular themes are shown in the table below, along with a response.

Theme/suggestion	Response
Fund from elsewhere in LCC budget	<p>Currently, Leeds City Council provides transport to around 3500 young people to their education setting each day. While the Council is statutorily obliged to make free of charge home to school travel arrangements for eligible children of compulsory school age, there is no similar statutory obligation on the local authority to provide transport for post-16 learners.</p> <p>However, the council currently still provides substantial discretionary assistance for post-16 learners with SEND. Recent analysis indicates that this assistance costs the local authority approximately £4m -£4.5m and may not always be promoting independence for young people.</p> <p>We want to ensure that the transport assistance we provide is the most appropriate for young people and their families, promotes independence and offers choice, while at the same time delivering a financially sustainable model of transport support.</p> <p>The Council is facing its largest financial challenge in recent history and we are committed to engaging with our</p>

	communities so we can collectively shape how we deliver services moving into the future.
Prioritise/assess individual cases	If the recommendations in this report are accepted, the transport policy will still assess transport assistance application, with those deemed eligible receiving an appropriate award. In all cases the council would continue to provide council-organised transport (mini-bus/private hire) on a discretionary basis for those with the most complex needs.

- 62 The process benefited from support and challenge via a Children and Families Scrutiny Working Group meeting which took place on 24 September 2024 to discuss the recommendations detailed in this report. Due to timing associated with the respective deadlines for publishing Executive Board papers and the scheduled meetings of the Scrutiny Board (required to approve the notes of the outcome of the Scrutiny Working Group) a supplementary document will be provided to Executive Board (marked for ease as Appendix 2), this document will follow the initial publication of Executive Board papers.
- 63 If the recommendations detailed in this report are approved, any changes would be implemented for young people newly entering post-16 education in September 2025 and onwards. All young people already in post-16 education at that point will continue on the current policy, except in a small number of cases where reassessment is required due to a change in circumstances, such as a change in their medical needs, a house move, a change of learning setting, or at certain key transition points in their learning where a new application for transport assistance is required.

What are the resource implications?

- 64 If approval is granted to implement the recommendations, it is estimated that a gross financial saving of £863,000 would be achieved in the 2025/26 academic year.
- 65 Based on an average of 10 new post-16 students with SEND, living within 3 miles of their education setting, receiving transport assistance each academic year, implementation of proposal 1 would result in an estimated annual saving of £63,000. In addition, it is anticipated that implementation of proposal 2 would achieve an annual saving of approximately £800,000. This projection based on an average yearly cohort of 115 new post-16 learners who are eligible for transport assistance, and 150 other individual post-16 learner changes in circumstance that result in a fresh application for transport assistance. The saving figure assumes all these learners would be awarded the maximum PTA award of £3000 per year vs. the £6,000 average cost of council-organised transport; that none would meet the exceptional circumstances criteria; and that any removal of council-organised transport would result in an immediate saving.
- 66 Longer-term the savings would be considerably greater as existing post-16 users of transport assistance either finish their post-16/post-19 education or have a significant change in circumstance that results in a fresh application for transport assistance. To demonstrate the potential level of saving that would be achieved over a period of three years as the proposed transitional arrangements would come to an end, applying proposals 1 and 2 to the current cohort of post-16 and post-19 learners would result in a saving of approximately £2.8M. In addition, as young people transition to adulthood with greater preparedness and independence, there will be long-term cost avoidance impact on demand for transport from Adults and Health services.

- 67 Transition costs are likely to arise from the complexities related to rescheduling vehicles and journeys; it is currently the case that children and young people of both statutory school age and post-16 age often attend the same learning settings and travel together on shared vehicles. There may be some delay in opportunities to reschedule fleet vehicles more efficiently, therefore, whilst the numbers of young people in post-16 learning continue to be transported at the same time as new entrants to post-16 learning begin to receive PTAs.
- 68 It is expected efficiencies will be realised more quickly in other areas, for example through a reduction in council contracts for private hire vehicles.
- 69 It is recognised the proposed rates for PTAs will need to be reviewed annually to consider these payments, taking into account factors such as inflation.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 70 Whilst the proposals aim to achieve greater independence and improved outcomes for young people with SEND, feedback from consultation indicates change may present families with challenges. We will therefore take steps to monitor the implementation and identify solutions, where possible, to issues that arise.
- 71 We will undertake a communications exercise to ensure that families and key services are aware of the changes well in advance.
- 72 We will link with the Local Offer and the information available to young people and families regarding post-16 choices, ensuring information is provided on the new transport offer as timely as possible to aid decisions around choices at post-16 for young people with SEND for September 2025 onwards. We will ensure our SENDIAS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information and Advisory Support) services are fully informed of any changes to the Children's Transport Policy, so as to be able to accurately advise families and young people.
- 73 We will work with colleagues at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to increase awareness of disability issues amongst public transport operators to make public transport increasingly accessible.
- 74 We will work with our independent Parent Partnership Forum, to monitor feedback from families in advance of the changes.
- 75 An Implementation Group comprising key stakeholders and led by a Children and Families project team will be established to oversee the implementation of any agreed new offer. An evaluation exercise, including feedback from young people and families, will be carried out after the first year of implementation to learn lessons and build from strengths.
- 76 Proposing changes to transport assistance for post-16 SEND learners may result in some young people choosing not to continue to participate in education or at their preferred choice of education provision. If changes were implemented, this risk is mitigated to some extent by a continued offer of assistance to those eligible under the new policy in addition to the local authority's Independent Travel Training (ITT) offer. The ITT team has recently been scaled up to offer more young people with the ability to complete ITT, the opportunity to do so.

- 77 There is a risk that the proposed changes to transport assistance would result in a greater number of appeals and complaints, including to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This risk would be mitigated largely by ensuring any revised Children Transport policy is legally compliant; that all eligibility criteria is unambiguous and can be easily understood by those considering applying for assistance; and by ensuring the council can apply discretion in exceptional circumstances.
- 78 There is a corporate risk around SEND and EHCP challenges linked to a nationwide increase in the number of applications for EHCPs for Children and Young People, which is putting a strain on all SEND services, including those assessing and scheduling SEND transport assistance. The number of post 16 young people living in Leeds with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 27% between July 2020 and July 2024, resulting in a 33% increase in applications for home to school transport assistance over the same period. Based on historic trends and birth rates alone, it is projected the number of post-16 young people living in Leeds with an EHCP will rise by a further 35% by 2030. If a decision is taken not to proceed with the proposed changes to transport assistance, there is an associated risk that rising demand will make the required financial savings unachievable.

What are the legal implications?

- 79 Whilst there is no absolute obligation for the local authority to make provision for post 16 SEND transport, the level of discretionary support to all post 16 transport must be one the local authority considers necessary given its various statutory duties to promote and help facilitate further and higher education. In this respect the Council's current discretionary offer could be generous. This doesn't mean the discretionary offer cannot be changed; however, the authority must be mindful of the impact any changes may have. Consultation has been undertaken in accordance with legal guidance.
- 80 Section 7, 'Full-time post-16 students with a recognised learning difficulty or disability who attend a qualifying school or college of further education', of existing Children's Transport Policy 2015 has been amended to reflect the recommended changes to post-16 transport assistance. In addition, the revised policy document (appendix 3) has a new title and sets out the related proposed stepped model of transport assistance. The proposed exceptional circumstances criteria and the provisional transitional arrangements that would be put in place if the revised policy is approved for implementation have also been added in for completeness. Some other minor changes have been made throughout the document to better reference all relevant law and legislative duties placed on the Council. These in no way affect the policy beyond the changes proposed to discretionary post-16 transport assistance,
- 81 Executive Board is the decision maker for any changes to the Children's Transport Policy, and statutory DfE guidance states that for any proposed changes to the school travel policy which may affect children's eligibility for transport, local authorities are to consult locally for at least 28 working days during term time. This is relevant for the Children's Transport Policy and the Post 16 Transport Statement. The Post 16 Transport Statement must be published by 31st May each year before the start of the academic year.
- 82 Consultation took place between 24 June 2024 – 23 July 2024, meeting the statutory DfE guidance of at least 28-working-day in term time. Presenting recommendations to Executive Board in October 2024 enables any agreed changes to the Children's Transport Policy for the 2024/25 academic year to be published by 31 May 2024 in line with the statutory guidance. This will give young people and families sufficient time to make informed choices about their future

learning, and any financial efficiencies for the council resulting from any policy change can start to be realised in the 2025/26 financial year.

- 83 When making a decision on this matter, Executive Board must have “due regard” to its duties under section 149 of the Equalities Act. To assist Executive Board to make an informed decision on these matters a full ECDI Assessment was carried out and the results can be found at Appendix 1.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 84 Consultation took place on a range of options (as detailed in paragraph 7 of this report) seeking feedback on the likely impact on families and young people of each individual options, and the combined impact of multiple options. These are detailed in paragraphs 8-21 of this report, along with the rationale, informed by the consultation feedback, why the other options were rejected for implementation at this time.
- 85 An option to do nothing was ruled out on the basis that it does not appear possible to eliminate the current overspend on the children’s transport budget without proposing some changes to discretionary elements of the current Children’s Transport Policy arrangements.

How will success be measured?

- 86 Impact on young people and families who may be affected by any agreed changes to the Children’s Transport Policy will continue to be monitored through the EDCI screening process, and action plans developed where appropriate to ensure the council continues to meet its equality duty.
- 87 An Implementation Group comprising key stakeholders and led by a Children and Families project team will be established to oversee the implementation of any agreed new offer. An evaluation exercise, including feedback from young people and families, would be carried out after the first year of implementation to learn lessons and build from strengths.
- 88 Guidance on safeguarding will be produced and disseminated to families to assist them with choosing transport for young people with SEND.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 89 It is recommended any potential future policy changes to the Children’s Transport Policy and the Post-16 Transport Statement are agreed and communicated ahead of the statutory deadlines for 2025 school place applications (Primary 15 January 2025, Secondary 31 October 2024) and ahead of the statutory deadline for EHCPs to be finalised by 31st March 2025. Reporting the outcome of consultation and recommended next steps to this Executive Board in October 2024, allows these deadlines to be met.
- 90 Any changes to policy approved, would be phased in so that the new criteria would only apply to new transport applications from September 2025, or where a learner’s circumstances have change, such as a house move or change of learning setting. This means any changes agreed would come into full effect over several years as cohorts of children and young people move through the education system.

91 The officer responsible for the implementation of any approved recommendations is the Director of Children and Families.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) assessment form.
- Appendix 2 : Scrutiny Statement – this document will follow the initial publication of Executive Board papers .
- Appendix 3: Draft Children and Young People’s Transport Policy (October 2024)

Background papers

- Consultation Analysis Report