

Committee:	<b>Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness</b>
Date:	<b>9 December 2013</b>
By:	<b>Interim Director of Children's Services</b>
Title of Report:	<b>Post 16 Student Grants</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To approve the proposed policy for reduced post-16 Transport grants for mainstream students from low income families from September 2014.</b>

**Recommendation:**

**Following the consultation exercise, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the proposed policy for reduced post-16 Transport grants for mainstream students from low income families from September 2014.**

**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 East Sussex County Council provides support with transport for mainstream students aged 16 to 19 from low income families depending on the public transport options available. All students (regardless of family income) currently have access to subsidised rail tickets, and in addition, students from low income families (i.e. meeting the eligibility criteria for free school meals) can access a free seat on a hired coach or a Freedom Ticket for travel on the public bus network. The grants described in this report are paid to eligible students who do not have alternative public transport options available, so they are paid an annual grant, in three equal instalments towards the cost of whatever transport arrangements the student makes.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 The budget for these post-16 grants for the financial year 2012/13 was £216k and there was a small underspend of £13.6k. The amount and type of support offered by the County Council is discretionary for FE students, and the savings target of 15% does mean that all areas of discretionary expenditure must be reviewed.

2.2 The budget for 2013/14 has been reduced by £9k in line with the savings target for the year. The policy and level of grants have not been changed for the 2013/14 year, due to the small underspend the previous financial year.

**3. Financial Information**

3.1 The number of termly payments (based on a three-term year) and the annual cost over the last three years is shown below:

<b>Financial year</b>	<b>Number of payments made</b>	<b>Annual cost</b>
2010/11	1,221	£168,913
2011/12	1,291	£180,583
2012/13	1307	£203,170

*(At the time of writing, the number of eligible mainstream students from September 2013 was 461, or approximately 1383 grant payments over an academic year, which is a projected increase of 75 payments on the previous financial year).*

3.2 Support for FE students is also provided from the Home to School Transport Budget in the form of Freedom Tickets used on public transport or a free seat on a hired vehicle as appropriate. The Home to School Transport Budget is also subject to a reduction of 15% but reductions in these areas are not covered in this report.

3.3 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) requires a total saving of 15% on all front line services and 20% on back office functions over three financial years, which for this specific budget means a reduction of £33k over three years from 2013 to 2016. It was recommended the savings are made across three years as per the table below:

Financial year	Percentage of savings and amount	Total budget
2013/14	4% (£9k*)	£207.8k
2014/15	8% (£17k)	£190.8k
2015/16	3% (£7k)	£183.8k
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>15% (£33k)</b>	

\* this saving has already been made

These savings drive the proposed policy for 2014/15 which is shown as Appendix 1. The Lead Member is advised that the grant amounts would be reduced from the 2013/14 levels shown in Appendix 2, and the calculations are based on the 2012/13 student numbers. The changed levels of grant would affect all post-16 students from low income families, but the reductions are very small, and no more than £24 per student per year. The policies for the 2015/16 academic year will be reviewed and consulted on in 2014/15 academic year.

#### 4. Consultation Exercise

4.1 The Lead Member approved the recommendation to consult on this proposal, and the exercise took place from 4 September 2013 to 25 October 2013. It was widely publicised among schools and FE providers who were asked to notify students as ask for their comments. The consultation was also published on the Authority's website.

4.2 There were six responses, five of which strongly disagreed with the proposal (83.33%) and one who neither agreed or disagreed (16.67%). One respondent was from a college and commented on an operational matter rather than the proposal to reduce grants. Four gave further reasons for their opposition to the proposal which included:

- The grant is already very low and does not cover the full cost of transport;
- Grants should be available to other families, not just those meeting the low income criteria;
- All children should be encouraged to stay in education.
- Young people are now expected to remain beyond the school leaving age

Alternative proposals for making the required savings were:

- Cut out some of the admin sections in the offices;
- Reduce the grant to those schools that through the changes in the formula are getting an excessive increase in their school funds.

Full details of all replies are shown as Appendix 3.

#### 5. Paying due regard to the Equality Duty

5.1 The proposed eligibility criteria mean that only families assessed as being 'low income' would qualify for support, ensuring the most vulnerable families continue to receive financial support to maximise their opportunities to attend further education placements.

A full equality impact assessment raised the following issues:

- Even though a small amount, the cuts in funding could discourage qualifying post 16 students from enrolling in further education. However, it is unclear whether the small size of the reduction in grant for each student will in practice significantly impact on attendance.
- The rural location of some pupils may have an influence on how the policy impacts them. 23% of post 16 students receiving transportation funding live 3-7 miles away from school; 22% live 7-10 miles away, and 55% live more than 10 miles away. As such, post 16 students living in more remote areas are overrepresented among those receiving transport funding.
- Furthermore, while the decrease in funding occurs at a flat rate of 3.8%, regardless of the student's distance from school, students from rural areas might still face a disadvantage given that they will lose more of their grant money. Those living 3-7 miles away from school will see the grant decrease by £12 a year, however students living more than 10 miles away will face a £24 reduction.

Mitigating plans:

- It is important to monitor how the proportion of students receiving grants at Levels 2 and 3 change over time, to identify how the number of reduction in grant has impacted students in rural areas.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

6.1 There is now a legal requirement for all children to stay on in education or employment or training until they reach the age of 17 in 2014 and 18 in 2015. The historical rationale for grants was to incentivise young people who were most vulnerable to underachievement to attend college. Given the changes in the legislation and the fact that government has not passed any additional transport funding to local government there is an argument to say that there is no longer a need to incentivise in this way. However we do recognise that if possible we would like to continue to support young people from low income families to attend a college of their choice albeit now with a reduced grant. However this discretionary transport area will need to be reviewed on an annual basis to take account of any changes to MTFP savings requirements. The Lead Member is therefore recommended to approve the proposed policy for reduced post-16 Transport grants for mainstream students from low income families from September 2014.

GED ROWNEY, Interim Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Sheila Locke, Head of Admissions and Transport

Tel: 01273 335771

Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Proposed policy for post-16 student grants for the 2014/15 academic year.

Appendix 2 - Current policy for post-16 student grants for the 2013/14 academic year

Appendix 3 – Comments received during the consultation exercise.



## Appendix 1.

### Proposed policy for post-16 student grants for the 2014/15 academic year

Students whose families are in receipt of one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit based on income of up to £16,190\* (\*may change in line with criteria for receiving free school meals)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

can receive help with transport from the County Council, if the distance between home and the nearest appropriate provision is over three miles. Help is provided in one of the following ways:

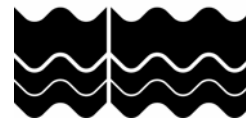
- an annual grant payable in three instalments. There are three levels of grant which are based on the distance from home to college measured by the shortest walking distance.
  - Level 1 (distance between 3 - 7 miles)    £300 per year (£100 per term)
  - Level 2 (distance between 7 - 10 miles)    £450 per year (£150 per term)
  - Level 3 (distance over 10 miles)    £600 per year (£200 per term)
- a free seat on a vehicle hired by the County Council  
*(available only to students attending sixth forms at East Sussex maintained secondary schools)*
- a season ticket on supported bus services

In addition, the course normally needs to run for a minimum of one academic year and needs to be on a full time basis.

Students not meeting the criteria for travel support but who still have genuine money difficulties, may be able to get a bursary from their school or college. The school or college will decide on the amount, and how the bursaries are paid. Ask your tutor or at your student support office for more details.

Please note that students doing **Apprenticeships** should have reasonable expenses met in full by their learning provider. Students enrolled on a short course, for example, a 16 week programme, should seek help from the course provider should the cost of travel be a barrier to attending.





## Appendix 2

### Current policy for post-16 student grants for the 2013/14 academic year

Students from families in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit based on income of up to £16,190
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit

are entitled to help with transport from the County Council, if the distance between home and the nearest appropriate provision is over three miles. Help is provided in one of the following ways:

- a free seat on a vehicle hired by the County Council  
*(available only to students attending sixth forms at East Sussex maintained secondary schools)*
- a season ticket on certain public bus services
- an annual grant payable in three instalments. There are three levels of grant which are based on the distance from home to college measured by the shortest walking distance.

<u>Level 1</u> (distance between 3 - 7 miles)	<b>£312 per year (£104 per term)</b>
<u>Level 2</u> (distance between 7 - 10 miles)	<b>£468 per year (£156 per term)</b>
<u>Level 3</u> (distance over 10 miles)	<b>£624 per year (£208 per term)</b>

In addition, the course normally needs to run for a minimum of one academic year and needs to be on a full time basis.

Students not meeting the criteria for travel support but who still have genuine money difficulties, may be able to get a bursary from their school or college. The school or college will decide on the amount, and how the bursaries are paid. Ask your tutor or at your student support office for more details.

Please note that students doing **Apprenticeships** should have reasonable expenses met in full by their learning provider. Students enrolled on a short course, for example, a 16 week programme, should seek help from the course provider should the cost of travel be a barrier to attending.





### Proposed changes to transport grants for qualifying 16 – 19 year olds

It has been determined that there will need to be a review of the funding support given to students, aged 16 -19 from low income families for transport to educational provision.

The eligibility criteria that sets out which low income families receive help with transport costs from the County Council for the 2014/2015 academic year will remain the same under the new proposal, but the amounts paid to qualifying students will be reduced. However no student would have their grant reduced by more than £24 per year (per annum - pa). This proposed change is necessary to achieve the required savings and make sure the provision is sustainable.

Where the student qualifies for this support, we are proposing that the grant levels will be reduced as follows:

- Level 1 (distance between 3-7 miles) currently £312pa reduced to £300pa
- Level 2 (distance between 7-10 miles) currently £468pa reduced to £450pa
- Level 3 (distance over 10 miles) currently £624pa reduced to £600pa

Grants will continue to be paid in three equal installments.

We would like to hear your views on this proposal as well as the impact it might have on you.

**Q1: What is your email address?**

3 (50%)

**Q2: Do you agree with our proposal?**

6 (100%)

Option	Total	Percent of all
Strongly agree	0	0%
Agree	0	0%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	16.67%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	5	83.33%
Don't know	0	0%
Not Answered	0	0%

**Q3: If you wish, please give your main reasons for your answer to Q2, including any impact the proposal would have on you.**

4 (66.7%)

**Q4: As we explained these savings have to be made. If you disagree with this proposal do you have any suggestions for how we could make these savings?**

2 (33.3%)

**Q5: Are you a...?** 6 (100%)

2 (33.3%)	Parent/carer or a student living in East Sussex receiving a transport grant
3 (50%)	Parent/carer or a student living in East Sussex not receiving a transport grant
1 (16.67%)	A member of staff or governor of an East Sussex School
0 (0%)	Other

**About you...**

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally and that no one gets left out. That's why we ask you these questions. We won't share the information you give us with anyone else. We will only use it to help us make decisions and make our services better.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don't have to.

**Q6: Are you...?** 6 (100%)

1 (16.67%)	Male
3 (50%)	Female
2 (33.33%)	Prefer not to say

**Q7: Do you identify as a transgender or trans person? Please select one answer.** 6 (100%)

0 (0%)	Yes
4 (66.67%)	No
2 (33.33%)	Prefer not to say
0 (0%)	Not answered

**Q8: Which of these age groups do you belong to? Please select one answer.** 6 (100%)

0 (0%)	Under 18
0 (0%)	18 – 24
0 (0%)	25 – 34
1 (0%)	35 – 44
4 (0%)	45 – 54
0 (0%)	55 – 59
0 (0%)	60 – 64
0 (0%)	65 – 74
0 (0%)	75+
1 (16.67%)	Prefer not to say

**Q9: What is your postcode?** 4 (66.67%)

**Q10: To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong? Source 2011 consensus) Please select one answer.** 6 (100%)

5 (83.33%)	White British
0 (0%)	White Irish
0 (0%)	White Gypsy/Roma
0 (0%)	White Irish Traveller

0 (0%)	White other
0 (0%)	Mixed White and Black Caribbean
0 (0%)	Mixed White and Black African
0 (0%)	Mixed White and Asian
0 (0%)	Mixed other
0 (0%)	Asian or Asian British Indian
0 (0%)	Asian or Asian British Pakistani
0 (0%)	Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
0 (0%)	Asian or Asian British other
0 (0%)	Black or Black British Caribbean
0 (0%)	Black or Black British African
0 (0%)	Black or Black British other
0 (0%)	Arab
0 (0%)	Chinese
1 (16.67%)	Prefer not to say
0 (0%)	Other ethnic group
0 (0%)	Not answered

The Equality Act 2010 describes a person disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted or is likely to last at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

**Q11: Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equalities Act 2010?** Please select one answer.

		6 (100%)
0 (0%)	Yes	
5 (83.33%)	No	
1 (16.67%)	Prefer not to say	
0 (0%)	Not answered	

**Q12: If you answered yes to Q11 please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you.**

0 (0%)

**Q13: Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion or belief?** Please select one answer.

		6 (100%)
2 (33.33%)	Yes	
3 (50%)	No	
1 (16.67%)	Prefer not to say	
0 (0%)	Not answered	

**Q14: If you answered yes to Q13 which one?** Please select one answer.

2 (33.33%)

2 (33.33%)	Christian
0 (0%)	Buddhist
0 (0%)	Hindu
0 (0%)	Jewish
0 (0%)	Muslim
0 (0%)	Sikh
0 (0%)	Other
4 (66.67%)	Not answered

**Q15: Are you....?** Please select one answer.

6 (100%)

0 (0%)	Bi/Bisexual
4 (66.67%)	Heterosexual/Straight
0 (0%)	Gay woman/Lesbian
0 (0%)	Gay man
0 (0%)	Other
2 (33.33%)	Prefer not to say
0 (0%)	Not answered

Comments following consultation for proposed changes to transport grants for qualifying 16 – 19 year olds

<b>Case 1</b>	Question 1: All children should be encouraged to stay in education for as long as possible. Especially those from low income families. That is just common sense and common decency.
	Question 2: Cut out some of the admin sections in your offices.

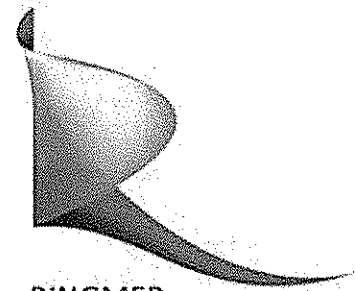
<b>Case 2</b>	Question 1: We need to encourage more students into higher education, I believe these reductions will have an adverse impact and that are other savings that should be taken before reducing this grant.
	Question 2: Reduce the grant to those schools that through the changes in the formula are getting an excessive increase in their schools funds

<b>Case 3</b>	Question 1: The grant should only be payable to the nearest / cheapest school offering the course or close equivalent requested. I do not understand why the funding should be for low income families when others who are equally struggling just over the threshold get nothing towards the costs of compulsory education.
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<b>Case 4</b>	Question 1: Families already stretched, Grant already low and does not by any means cover the cost of transport. May mean children's education cut short if cut further especially if like me you have 3 children going to college at the same time.
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Email response from parent

<b>1.</b>	With regard to the consultation taking place at present, I would like to point out that YP are expected by the government to stay in education until the age of 17. It is unfair to expect parents to pay £120 per half term for the bus which has an empty space anyway.
	<i>Dear Thank you for your email. I will ensure your comments are included in the consultation feedback. Kind regards</i>
	Thank you... can I just add that there is no public transport in Hadlow Down at 8.30 a.m. to get the sixth formers to school, and it is a backwards step to have to get a lift from parents! Surely an empty seat on the school bus should be put to good use, particularly in terms of fuel economy. Thank you



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Principal: Ms K Stonier, BA (Hons) NQPH

11 September 2013

Dear Parent/Carer

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has asked me to bring to your attention three consultations they have launched that may affect transport provisions for some of our students. ESCC has a statutory responsibility to provide home to school transport to our students. The details of the consultations are as follows:

**1. Have your say about the future support for transport from home to educational establishments for students with special needs attending further education**

The ESCC currently provides free transport from home to their educational establishment for students aged 16 – 21 who require this support due to their SEN or disability. Students without SEN or a disability are means tested, and transport (or payment of grants where there is no existing transport) is only provided for qualifying students from low income families. The proposal is that free transport from home to educational establishment should be provided for post 16 students with SEN who are from low income families, and to charge a contribution of £370 per student per year towards the cost of transport for all other post 16 students with SEN. Implementation is proposed to start from September 2014.

**2. Have your say about future transport grants for 16 – 19 year olds travelling to school or college**

The ESCC is reviewing the transport grants for 16 – 19 year olds. This support is currently only provided for students where bus travel is not available. The proposed changes are as minimal as possible in order to limit the negative impact on eligible recipients. This review is necessary to ensure that low income families continue to be supported with transport provision, but that it is done in a way that is sustainable in the future and compatible with reduced resources. The ESCC understands that this is going to be an unpopular proposal and a difficult change but the current provision is unsustainable under the current budget.

The eligibility criteria that sets out which low income families receive help with transport costs from the ESCC for the 2014/15 academic year will remain the same under the new proposal, but the amounts paid to qualifying students will be reduced. However, the ESCC state that no student would have their grant reduced by more than £24 per year.

**3. Have your say on transport provision for children in areas that are served by more than one school (shared areas)**

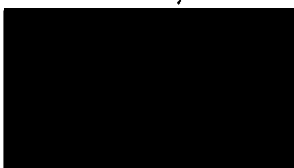
The ESCC is reviewing the current transport provision for shared area schools, which is currently not applied in line with the Home to School Transport policy. The current arrangement is that, if a student in a shared area lives over 3 miles from the school, they provide transport to either school in their shared area. This goes over and above what the Transport policy states should be provided. The proposal from September 2014 is that the

ESCC will only provide transport to the nearest school, as stated in their policy. Pupils who are currently in receipt of transport to a shared areas school that is further away will continue to receive the provision. This proposed change will make transport provision more equitable with those students who do not live in shared areas and who have only been receiving

assistance to their nearest school. This proposed change has been advertised in the Schools Admissions Booklet for next year so that parents / carers and pupils are aware this may happen when making their school place applications.

ESCC is keen for as many people as possible to contribute their views. The consultations are published on the East Sussex County Council website and if people have any further questions they can contact the Information for Families team, by telephone on 0345 60 80 192. The helpline is open Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm and Fridays 8.30am to 4.30pm or by email on [informationforfamilies@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:informationforfamilies@eastsussex.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



Ms K Stonier  
Principal

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## Katie Neal

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**From:** CS Information For Families  
**Sent:** 01 October 2013 10:45  
**To:** Katie Neal  
**Subject:** FW: Feedback on School Transport Consultations - FAO Sheila Locke  
Hi Katie

Please see email below re Transport Consultation

Thanks

Julie

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**From:** James Hibbert [mailto: [REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** 30 September 2013 14:29  
**To:** CS Information For Families  
**Cc:** Sandra Smith  
**Subject:** Feedback on School Transport Consultations - FAO Sheila Locke

Dear Sheila,

Your letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> August refers.

I'd like the following point noted as it appears in your letter:

1. If ESCC continues to administer future transport grants then a system which mirrors WSCC should be adopted. It is not practical for beneficiary families to receive their travel grant after the term has started – it causes a lot of problems during the student enrolment process for students who don't have the funds to pay for travel without the grant being in place. WSCC email us with notification of which student has been awarded support and we then issue the student with a termly bus pass and invoice WSCC for it – the system works a lot better for the students concerned.

Regards

James Hibbert  
Student & Residential Services Manager  
Office: 01273 892 037  
Mobile: 07827 018 373

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