

Committee:	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability
Date:	24 May 2022
Title of Report:	Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2022-2023
By:	Director of Children's Services
Purpose of Report:	To approve the proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2022-2023 academic year

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2022-23 academic year as set out in Appendix 3.

1. Background

1.1 Once young people reach school leaving age, the assistance local authorities are required to provide with transport to school or college changes. There is no obligation to provide free school transport that some younger children are entitled to (as a result of, for example, age and distance to the nearest school or because of the nature of the walking route). There is a duty, however, on the local authority to provide travel assistance to learners of sixth form age and adult learners if it is considered necessary.

1.2 The County Council exercises its discretion to determine what transport or financial support is necessary to facilitate young people's attendance. To inform young people and their parents what arrangements are available locally, we must publish the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement each year. The statement aims to be a single point of reference that outlines the help that might be available through the County Council, schools, colleges and transport operators to help all young people of sixth form age and young adult learners aged 19+ (up to 25) who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to get to school and college. It includes information about:

- fares and concessions;
- the Council's home to school/college transport policy for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); and
- contact details for mainstream colleges and schools with sixth forms.

1.3 The County Council is required to consult on the Post-16 transport policy statement each year before it is published on or before 31 May.

2. Supporting information

2.1 The consultation asked for comments from secondary schools, colleges and special schools on the proposals. Additionally, they were asked to bring it to the attention of current Year 11 students as well as current sixth formers (and their parents or carers).

2.2 Consultation took place between 4 March 2022 and 1 April 2022 and sought views on the draft transport policy statement (**Appendix 1**).

2.3 Changes in the proposed Transport Policy Statement relate to dates and anticipated changes to travel costs.

2.4 There are no substantial changes to the policy around the help from the Council that is available to young people. There are, however, potential cost changes for students but it is too early to be definite about these because, for example, the Freedom Ticket is expected to change in August 2022 (the Freedom Ticket offers unlimited travel on nearly every bus in East Sussex for seven days in a row, including weekends). The cost is set by the County Council in consultation with the bus operators. The current price of £17.50 per week has been held at pre-Covid-19 levels. There may also be a change to the charge to buy a vacant seat on a contracted coach. This charge is representative of the average cost of a seat across all school coaches.

Consultation responses

2.5 There were 13 responses, and these are set out in **Appendix 2**.

2.6 The comments included calls for fares to be reduced, described operational issues experienced by some users and made suggestions for improved services. These comments have been forwarded to colleagues in Public Transport.

2.7 Some respondents felt that Post-16 transport should be free. Students facing financial hardship can apply to their course provider for a discretionary bursary. The Post 16 Transport Policy Statement signposts young people and their parents to sources of available financial help.

2.8 Some felt the policy may discriminate against young people with SEND. The Council's policy complies with the law and statutory guidance and transport assistance is provided where it is considered necessary, subject to any charges that might apply.

3. Conclusion and reason for recommendation

3.1 The County Council has carried out its legal duty to consult on the annual Post-16 Transport Policy statement.

3.2 Following consultation, the proposed statement is unchanged from the draft statement. The Lead Member is therefore, recommended to agree the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement as outlined in **Appendix 3** to fulfil its statutory duty.

3.3 After publication, the County Council may revise a statement to change the arrangements specified should it be considered necessary. This can include revisions to prices which may be subject to change before the start of the academic year as pointed out in paragraph 2.4.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for consultation

Appendix 2 – Comments made during the consultation period

Appendix 3 – Proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2022-23