

## Comments made by six members of the East Sussex Youth Cabinet on the LIF transport consultation

### Background

On 24th August 2015 six member of the East Sussex Youth Cabinet met to discuss the LIF post 16 transport proposals and also completed the online LIF survey to express their opinions.

As '**Transport**' is one of the current Youth Cabinet members' key campaigns they wanted to have a voice in these proposals, but when they met they also expressed the view that all Youth Cabinet members should be informed and involved if they want to be, as it is a bigger issue of 'access to education'.

In addition to the individual questionnaires members responded to, the Youth Cabinet had a group discussion to explore their views and ideas in more details and these have been summarised below. They would like the following to be considered alongside their individual questionnaire responses.

#### 1. Having a voice on the proposals and impact to young people.

The Youth Cabinet members proposed the idea of having a meeting with senior managers/Members/decision makers so that they could express their opinions and ideas as a group, face to face; to help influence decisions on '**how**' the proposals would be implemented, with a specific focus on awareness raising and communication with young people/families eligible to apply for the hardship fund. Senior management have agreed to a meeting as the Council will need to communicate with young people and families and this would therefore be beneficial. The Youth Cabinet was also concerned about young people in rural areas and is aware of further reductions to public bus services.

Youth Cabinet members also highlighted that these decisions seem to go against the new ESCC Children and Young People's Plan and its priorities, many of which are the opposite of cutting vulnerable young people's chances to attain and stay in education. One Youth Cabinet member commented '*Seems strange that one part of the county council asks for us as the Youth Cabinet to come up with priorities that include making sure low income families and young people have an equal chance and right to education and then another part of the county council ask us to help them work out how to do the opposite with more travel cuts to low income families*'.

**2. General additional comments discussed as a group, including an ESCC response are included in the table below:**

YC comment or question	ESCC Response
<p>a) Youth Cabinet felt the overall principle of making the mandatory participation age in education or training to 18 and then not helping those get to their place of education, wrong. They felt there would be those that would fall between the gaps. ESCC needs to look more carefully at the impact. '<i>Should be hand in hand</i>'. Youth Cabinet felt that you can't make it against the law to not attend and then not offer support to those that are most in need.</p>	<p>Although the government raised the participation age for young people to be engaged in education, employment or training to the age of 18 years, there is no requirement for the Council to provide transport from home to the place of education, employment or training beyond Year 11. Parents have overall responsibility for getting their child to post-16 provision, as there is no statutory duty for the Council to do so, and the majority of young people get themselves to sixth form or college without any support. ESCC agree that there is likely to be some negative impact from this change, however the Council is faced with reducing budgets and therefore need to reduce spend on discretionary areas of support.</p>
<p>b) If there isn't a college or sixth form in the area, this will mean students will need to travel and go out of their town, so how will they get there if on low income? Especially if it is out of county and there is no other financial support.</p>	<p>Colleges and sixth forms have access to other funding, which whilst limited, should be able to be used with the Hardship Fund to help the most disadvantaged students.</p>
<p>c) With further cuts to sixth form funding for schools how will this impact the hardship fund? Are there enough places for all the potential students, especially if it is mandatory to stay in education in the future?</p>	<p>The Hardship Fund is not linked to direct funding for sixth forms, although the Council is stating that if there are further cuts, the amount of the Hardship Fund may be reviewed and reduced in the future.</p>
<p>d) If you are a child in care, will they be eligible for hardship grants/who will pay and how will students access it and be given the necessary support from their workers/fosters carers etc?</p>	<p>Young people age 16-19 in care or care leavers are eligible for a full EFA bursary of up to £1,200 per year, which is claimed via the sixth form or college.</p>
<p>e) As the participation age has increased and the number of young people in post 16 education has increased, will this not stretch this budget even further meaning that vulnerable young people will be overlooked, more people going for even more limited funds?</p>	<p>This is quite possible and is acknowledged.</p>
<p>f) Is there another way for those YP to be transported that wouldn't affect the fund? i.e. Community transport, discounted travel?</p>	<p>The Council's Passenger Transport Team regularly review the public transport offer for young people with the aim of delivering best value and targeted provision within the limited financial envelope available.</p>

### 3. Responses to questionnaire – proposal to remove support for students from LIF

YC comment or question	ESCC Response
a) Increases chances of hardest to reach young people dropping out of college/sixth form/training	This has been acknowledged, whilst the Council will make every effort to ensure least negative impact via mitigation, such as the allocation of the Hardship Fund to colleges.
b) The hardship fund may not be taken up if you can only access it once you at your college campus. Needs to be accessible before term starts and raise awareness in year 11. How will students know about hardship fund? Idea to also make clear on college applications and open days? How will vulnerable families access this and be given any necessary support?	It is proposed that the Fund will be administered via the colleges and they will be advised to make sure that students are aware of financial support and how to access this as soon as possible.
c) People will fall between the gaps especially those who are low income, but not eligible, but not the most vulnerable.	If they are not eligible for the Hardship Fund, they would not be eligible for free transport support currently; therefore these changes will not affect this group?
d) When would the cut-off date be to apply, what is the threshold? What if family circumstances change through the year? Can they apply on an on-going basis, not just at the start of term?	These details will be finalised via consultation with colleges; they will then need to publicise their own arrangements to students. They know their students and can respond to changes.
e) Will the hardship fund be available to all who are eligible or just through certain colleges and sixth forms? How will access and equality in decision making be ensured? Who will make the decision? College level or county level? Fairness is key!	The current favoured model (to reach the most vulnerable) is for the Fund to be allocated to the 'Top 5' providers only (which had significantly higher numbers of free transport claimants in 2014/15 compared with other providers). These 5 providers are:
f) If grants are being made to colleges only in low income area eg. Hastings, sounds difficult to administer and also unfair to other parts of the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sussex Downs College</li> <li>• Plumpton College</li> <li>• Sussex Coast College</li> <li>• Bexhill College</li> <li>• DV8 Bexhill</li> </ul>
g) What about crossing district and county boundaries for college? Due to course i.e. Lewes YP going to Eastbourne or Brighton? What about those going out of county? Some transport costs will be higher.	This is likely to be further weighted towards Plumpton College as they have a higher proportion of low income students and the viability of some of their courses may otherwise be threatened.
	Colleges will continue to promote the support available to new students and on their websites.
	ESCC welcomes support from the YC in discussing the details of the Hardship Fund administration.
h) How will this impact on young people who have been awarded a 'scholarship' to a sixth form or college? If they can't afford to travel, will they have to turn down their scholarship? Youth Cabinet felt this cohort should be considered if	As there is limited support, it will be restricted to those who can demonstrate the low income criteria.

**YC comment or question****ESCC Response**

borderline, but not eligible for the hardship fund.

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| i) Apprentices get travel support. Seems there would be disparity between those taking up apprenticeships and those taking up a college course? Will this push more young people into apprenticeships from lower income families who would have preferred an A level course? There will be pros and cons on this for apprenticeship pathways. | Yes – all of these suppositions are possible.  |
| j) Easier to pick up 'knock on' effect issues that affect vulnerable young people if they are at college. Surely this has a better impact financially for ESCC services if problems are found out at college, rather than when it's too late, ie sexual health, mental health, housing etc especially for vulnerable and low income students. | It is hoped that the most vulnerable students will still be supported to attend college via the Hardship Fund. A number of services work with the most vulnerable young people so it is hoped that issues would still be identified. |
| k) Have they reviewed statutory U16's travel budget to see if any waste or underspend that could be put to over 16's budget?  | This is being reviewed and scrutinised continuously in order to make savings – so that more is left available for discretionary age groups, however the Council has little flexibility in terms of statutory provision.              |
| l) -Is it worth it!? Communicating with us if decision is already made.   | It has been very helpful to hear views from young people on the potential impact and ideas for mitigation. ESCC will also meet with YC to discuss administration of the Hardship Fund.   |
| m) Loads of other costs already for new students? Books, clothes lunches? How is ESCC making sure it understands the full financial impact of a student starting post 16 education/training   | ESCC will be monitoring the impact on figures for young people continuing in post-16 education and consulting with colleges to understand the support they are providing and where there may be gaps.                                |

#### 4. Responses to questionnaire – proposal to cease FE Link transport

YC comment or question	ESCC Response
a) Will low income families in rural areas been seen as a priority? Already cutting bus routes last year, so even more impact going forward.	This is a very small number (3 in 2014/15) of 16-19 year olds living in rural locations, and this free transport to a train or bus stop is not means-tested. ESCC will be monitoring impact and open to communication from colleges regarding any exceptional cases for which lack of public transport is making it impossible for a young person to attend post-16 education.
b) Can Low income Families access community transport schemes already in place for challenging locations? - Community transport options, is there any other transport options.	The free FE Link transport has been offered as all other options have been exhausted, and the YP is over 3 miles from the nearest station or bus stop.
c) If participation age is raised but there's no one being prosecuted, what would happen if parents refused to allow them to attend? Is it a form of child abuse/neglect, again this could be another reason parents keep young people away from education.	Responsibility for continuing with education lies with the young person. If their parent is unable or refuses to support them, they should contact their college or sixth form's student services and ask for support.