



Home to School/College Transport Consultation 2012

The City council currently spends a total of £4.5 million per year on home to school/college transport. Following approval of budget proposals for 2012/13 and 2013/14 the council is required to make reductions in discretionary home to school/college travel provision to achieve savings of £255,000 in 2013/14 and £343,000 in subsequent years. As a result of public expenditure constraints it is clear however that the City council may now be required to achieve even more savings in this area. In this event all discretionary provision may be removed. If approved the changes will take effect from September 2013.

This consultation has been produced to give pupils, students, parents/carers and other people the opportunity to comment on the City council's proposals for changes to home-to-school/college transport.

Every council in the country is facing considerable pressure on public services and Leicester City Council has to make significant savings. Whilst the majority of the home to school transport budget funds pupils who are eligible in law for free transport to school, the council also provides transport to other pupils and students at its own discretion. The council is already required to make reductions in discretionary home to school transport provision to achieve savings of £255,000 in 2013/14 and £343,000 in subsequent years. The consultation seeks views on this matter and the possibility that the Council may need to end all discretionary provision. This consultation covers:

- ♦ Discretionary Transport assistance for pupils who attend voluntary aided schools
- ♦ Discretionary Post 16 transport arrangements
- ♦ Discretionary Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements

Leicester City Council has a duty to ensure that every child in the city has access to a school place; for some children the council has a legal duty to provide free home to school transport.

Most parents/carers send their children to the school in their catchment area school, or to the nearest available school. The council provides free transport to the nearest available eligible school for any full-time pupil when there is no school place available within the 'statutory walking distance' as stated in the Education Act 1996.

The following table shows the council's **statutory duty to provide school transport**; this provision is protected in law and will be **unaffected** by any of the proposed changes.

Age / Type of Pupil	Statutory entitlement
Pupils up to the age of 8 (year 3)	Free transport to the nearest available eligible school if it is more than two miles walking distance from home. (see note 1)
Pupils between the ages of 8 and 16 (years 4 – 11)	Free transport to the nearest available eligible school if it is more than three miles walking distance from home.
Pupils aged between 8 and 10 (years 4 – 6) who are in eligible for Free School Meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit	Free transport to the nearest eligible school if it is more than two miles walking distance from home.
Pupils aged between 11 and 16 (years 7 – 11) who are eligible for Free School Meals or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit	Free transport is provided to one of the three nearest eligible schools if it is between two miles (walking route) and six miles away (road route). If a school is preferred by reason of a parent's religion or belief then free transport is provided if the school is more than two miles (walking route) and not more than 15 miles away (road route) and it is the nearest school of that faith.
Pupils with Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility issues (aged 4 – 16).	Free transport to the nearest eligible school, where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance from school and where, due to relevant documented special needs or disability or mobility issues, they are unable to walk in reasonable safety, even when accompanied. Transport will be provided to pupils who have a statement of special educational need which sets out a clear requirement for free transport to the school specified in the statement.
Pupils who live within the statutory walking distance who are unable to walk in safety to school because of the nature of the route (aged 4 – 16).	Free transport to the nearest eligible school where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance from school and where, due to the nature of the route, they are unable to walk in reasonable safety even when accompanied.

Note 1: Eligible schools are defined as the closest school(s) to the address at which the child resides with their parent(s) or legal guardian(s); schools can be located in either the City or County. A faith school is only classed as an eligible school for children of the faith represented by the school; a single sex school is only classed as an eligible school for children of the same sex admitted to the school (i.e. only boys or only girls).

The Council is proposing the following changes:

Proposal 1: Transport assistance to voluntary aided schools.

In addition to its statutory duties, Leicester City Council currently funds transport beyond the nearest available school if a child attends his/her nearest voluntary aided faith school, provides evidence to confirm that he/she is a regular and practising member of that faith and that school is over the statutory walking distance. This provision is funded even where there is another non faith school closer than the faith school. This benefit is not accorded to the children of parents at other categories of school who express a preference and receive a school place greater than the statutory walking distance.

It is proposed to remove this discretionary assistance and treat all families on an equitable basis.

This would affect approximately 232 pupils travelling to voluntary aided schools including English Martyrs Catholic School, St Paul's Catholic School and Madani High School.

This proposal would achieve savings of approximately £23,000 in 2013/14 and £46,000 per year in subsequent years.

In introducing this change the council would continue to provide statutory free transport to families who meet a low income eligibility test (see note 2); approximately 68 pupils would still receive free transport under the low income provision.

Note 2: the low income eligibility test used to determine entitlement to free transport is that that the child or young person is entitled to free school meals or their family is in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

Proposal 2: Post 16 transport arrangements

The City council provides financial assistance to all Post 16 students who travel to their educational provision if their journey is in excess of 3 miles. The council currently subsidises the cost of this provision for all students regardless of family income. There is no legal requirement upon the council to provide such financial assistance.

It is proposed that in future transport assistance may only be provided to those students whose family meet a determined low income eligibility test (see note 3). This proposal would save the council approximately £65,000 in 2013/14 and £130,000 per year in subsequent years.

If further savings are sought the Council may seek to remove this discretionary assistance to all students including those students whose family meet a determined low income eligibility test. This removal would result in additional savings of £30,000 in 2013/14 and £60,000 in subsequent years.

Proposal 3: Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements

Currently the City council provides financial assistance to all Post 16 students with special educational needs who receive their education in either a mainstream or special school sixth form or a further education college, if they meet the published eligibility criteria. The council subsidises the cost of this transport for all students regardless of income. Transport is usually provided by means of a taxi or minibus. Eligibility for transport to a college is based on the student having previously had a statement of special educational needs and the course of study being over 16 hours per week. Those whose families are in receipt of Income Support or Income based job seekers allowance or other benefits (see note 3) are provided with free transport whilst those families who do not receive such benefits pay a contribution of £160 per annum. The average cost of transport per year for each student is £3,000 - £4,000.

It is proposed that in future subsidised transport may only provided to those students who meet the low income criteria (see note 3).

This proposal would achieve savings of approximately £167,000 per year.

Note 3: post-16 transport is free to students living in a family receiving, or themselves receiving, Income Support or Pension Credit, Income Based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Based Employment Support (not contribution based) or National Asylum Support Service funding.

If further savings are sought the Council may seek to remove this discretionary assistance to all such students including those students whose family meet a determined low income eligibility test. This removal would result in additional savings of £88,000 in 2013/14 and £175,000 in subsequent years.

Further details on eligibility are contained in the Home to School Transport Policy, Home to School Transport Policy for Children with Special Educational Needs/Disability/Mobility Needs and the Post-16 Transport Policy statement and can be viewed at:

www.leicester.gov.uk/schooltransport

The council intends to fully implement all aspects of the current policies and to review entitlement for children with special educational needs according to the council's defined criteria.

Have your say.....

The council is seeking your views on the proposals set out above. You can respond by completing the online questionnaire or by printing a copy of the questionnaire to fill in; completed questionnaires should be sent to:

FREEPOST 985/33
Home to School/College Transport Consultation
Leicester City Council
New Walk Centre
Leicester
LE1 7ZP

Members of the public can access the council's website free of charge on computers in local libraries within the city.

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