

# Post-16 Transport

Public consultation on provision of transport and transport assistance for 16-19 year olds attending schools and colleges

February 2017

Children, Families and Adults

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## **Purpose of this document**

This public consultation document sets out proposed changes to Cornwall Council's Post-16 Transport Policy.

We are seeking views on the proposals from all interested parties, including:

- Young people
- Parents/carers
- Schools, colleges and other learning providers
- Members of the public

## **What are we consulting on?**

Cornwall Council's Post-16 Transport Policy sets out how and when the Council provides subsidised transport for young people aged 16-19<sup>1</sup> to attend school, college or another education establishment.

We are consulting on a number of potential changes to this policy which would come into effect from either September 2017 or September 2018.

The consultation will run from Friday 3 February 2017 until Friday 17 March 2017 and everyone is welcome to give their views. Details of how you can do this can be found later in this document.

## **Why are changes being proposed?**

Whilst young people are now required by law to be engaged in education, employment or training up to the age of 18, Cornwall Council does not have a statutory duty to provide home to school/college transport free of charge for learners aged 16 to 19 in the same way as it does for primary and secondary aged pupils up to the end of Year 11. The Council's subsidised post-16 transport scheme is a discretionary provision.

The Post-16 Transport Scheme is part of the Council's Home to School/College budget of around £13 million per year. This budget was overspent by £0.23 million in 2015/16, despite an injection of additional funding of £0.7 million, and is forecast to overspend by £1 million in 2016/17 despite a further additional top-up from reserves of £1.06 million.

Significant reductions to local government funding in recent years have widely impacted across the Council's education and social care services, and the Council has a responsibility to review all of its policies in order to make best use of available resources.

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<sup>1</sup> The current policy also covers transport for learners aged up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The changes proposed in this document will apply only to learners aged 16-19. A separate policy will apply to students aged 19-25 with an EHCP and is currently under development.

## **What is the current policy?**

Under Section 509AA of the Education Act 1996, local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement. This must specify the arrangements for the provision of transport or otherwise that the authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all 'persons of sixth form age' receiving education or training.

Cornwall Council currently provides subsidised transport for learners aged between 16 and 19 to access post-16 education at a school sixth form, further education establishment or Local Authority commissioned learning provider.

Learners are eligible for subsidised transport where they are attending a full-time course at their nearest (or designated) establishment offering the chosen course of study and this is more than three miles from their home address. 'Link' transport is only provided where a learner lives more than five miles from a transport pick-up point.

Learners are also eligible for subsidised transport if they live within three miles of the establishment but have a disability, medical or mobility problems or individual needs which mean that they could not reasonably be expected to walk the distance required, or Cornwall Council has assessed the route as unsuitable for pedestrian use.

Currently the contribution payable by all learners is £398 per learner for the 2016/17 academic year, regardless of the type or cost of transport provided. In 2014 it was agreed that this should rise in line with inflation each year.

Transport is provided by the most cost-effective suitable method, including contract and public service buses, taxis, minibuses and rail. In exceptional circumstances a mileage allowance may be awarded where no alternative suitable transport is available.

Transport is provided to meet a learner's individual needs and where these are multiple or complex may include individualised provision and/or a passenger assistant. For this reason the cost of transport for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and /or disability is significantly greater per learner than mainstream.

## **Cost of the scheme**

In 2015/16 the net cost to the Council of providing post-16 transport was £1.5 million.

## **What are the aims of the proposed changes?**

The proposed changes to the transport policy are intended to:

- Increase the learner contribution towards the cost of transport provided in order to reduce the level of subsidy and overall net cost to the Council of discretionary post-16 provision
- Remove the scheme's reliance on taxis and minibuses and promote increased use of public transport
- Encourage the expansion of colleges and schools own transport schemes, including partnerships with public networks
- Promote the choice and independence of all young people in relation to travel and transport

## **What will the new scheme look like?**

It is proposed that by September 2018 the Council's transport scheme would no longer offer transport via taxis, minibuses or public transport services.

Instead the scheme would operate a number of 'core' contract bus routes, based primarily on the principle of providing transport to the nearest establishment serving an area and where alternative public transport services do not exist.

All learners who live more than three miles from the establishment they are attending would be able to purchase a pass for the core route of their choice, regardless of whether it is the nearest establishment to them, but would need to make their own travel arrangements to the nearest pick-up point. The cost of a pass would increase to £600 per academic year.

Link taxi/minibus transport would no longer be provided where a learner lives more than five miles from a pick up point or where core bus routes are not available, although a mileage allowance could be offered in these cases (where a learner is attending the nearest establishment offering the chosen course of study).

Taxi or minibus provision would no longer be provided for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and/or disability who are unable to travel on contract or public services. Instead, qualifying learners would be offered a personal transport budget to make private travel arrangements to the nearest establishment offering the chosen course of study.

Young people with an EHCP would be supported to develop skills and confidence in using public transport as they move into adulthood through a programme of independent travel training.

The proposed main changes and their impact are explained in more detail on the following pages.

## **Proposed change 1: Develop a programme of independent travel training for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disability**

**Current policy:** The Council does not provide or promote independent travel training for young people.

**Proposed new policy:** Develop a programme of independent travel training for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disability to develop confidence and skills in using public transport.

**Date of proposed change:** From 1 September 2018

### **Who will be affected?**

In many cases, young people who have received individualised transport to school at primary or secondary age will have similar transport continue to their post-16 placement. However, in a number of cases these young people would, with the appropriate support, be able to access public transport provision.

It is proposed that a programme of independent travel training is developed, to begin at secondary school age, which would promote young people's skill and confidence in using public transport and encourage independence as they move into adulthood.

## **Proposed change 2: An increase in the learner contribution for Post-16 transport**

**Current policy:** All learners participating in the Post-16 subsidised transport scheme pay a contribution of £398.

**Proposed new policy:** The contribution is increased to £600 for all learners aged 16 – 19.

**Date of proposed change:** From 1 September 2017

### **Who would be affected?**

All learners aged 16-19 using the Council's post-16 transport scheme would be required to pay the new contribution.

This would greatly reduce the level of subsidy provided by the Council in a number of cases and reflect a move towards a full cost recovery model of the transport provided.

Whilst no discounts are offered on the Council's post-16 transport scheme, the 16-19 Bursary Fund is provided by the Government to support the most financially disadvantaged 16-19 year olds with the cost of staying in education or training. Schools and colleges determine their own assessment criteria for eligibility for discretionary bursaries, which is administered by individual establishments rather than the local authority, with many offering further financial assistance towards the cost of the Council's subsidised transport or the school/college's own transport provision for eligible learners.

For comparison purposes, the cost of post-16 travel schemes in similar authorities is as follows:

Devon County Council: £580 per annum

Norfolk County Council: £504 per annum

Somerset County Council: £675 per annum (for a full public service pass)

## **Proposed change 3: Cease to provide public service passes as part of the scheme**

**Current policy:** Transport is provided to all eligible learners, which will include a pass for public transport services (including bus and rail) where these are available.

**Proposed new policy:** The scheme will only provide transport using contract bus routes. Where alternative public transport exists learners will need to purchase a pass/tickets direct from the operator.

**Date of proposed change:** From 1 September 2017

### **Who will be affected?**

Core contract routes will in general only be provided in areas where alternative public services are not available.

Learners aged 16-19 for whom public transport services are available for the majority of their journey to school/college will be expected to purchase a pass/tickets directly from the operator or via a College scheme (where available).

Truro and Penwith College, in partnership with First Kernow, offers an alternative transport scheme whereby learners can purchase a season bus pass for travel to college for a cost of £515 per annum (2016/17).

Cornwall College also runs its own contracted routes (and offers some public service passes) available to learners living more than three miles from the College campus at a cost of £398 (2016/17).

Disadvantaged learners will be able to apply to their school/college for support with travel costs through the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

## **Proposed change 4: Cease to provide mainstream taxi or minibus provision as part of the scheme**

**Current policy:** Subsidised transport is provided to all eligible learners, which will be by taxi or minibus where other provision is not available. Link transport is also provided where a student lives further than five miles from a transport pick-up point.

**Proposed change:** Mainstream taxi or minibus transport would cease to be provided. Students would instead need to make their own arrangements to access either a 'core' contract bus network or public services.

**Date of proposed change:** From 1 September 2018

### **Who will be affected?**

Under the current policy, taxi or minibus transport is provided for eligible mainstream learners where:

- No public transport services are available and the numbers travelling do not require a larger vehicle; or
- A learner lives more than five miles from a bus pick-up point, so link transport is provided; or
- A learner is attending his or her nearest provision offering the chosen course of study, but the journey cannot be made via contract or public bus provision (for example, it may be further away than other establishments).

It is proposed that taxi or minibus provision is no longer provided under the scheme. The Council would instead operate a number of 'core' bus routes. Learners would be able to purchase a pass for any of these core routes (which would extend choice of education establishments) but would need to make their own travel arrangements to their nearest pick-up point. Link transport would no longer be provided where the nearest pick up point is further than five miles from the home address.

A mileage allowance towards private transport arrangements could be offered in these cases (where the learner is attending his or her nearest establishment).

## **Proposed change 5: Cease to provide taxi transport for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disability, and instead provide a personal transport budget for eligible learners**

**Current policy:** Where an eligible learner is unable, due to their individual needs, to access public or contract bus provision, taxi transport is provided.

**Proposed change:** Taxi transport would no longer be provided for learners who, due to their individual needs and/or disability, are unable to access public or contract bus provision. Instead, qualifying learners would be offered a personal transport budget to make private travel arrangements to the nearest establishment offering the chosen course of study.

**Date of proposed change:** From 1 September 2018

### **Who will be affected?**

In 2015/16, £1million was spent on taxi/minibus provision for learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disability attending schools and colleges. The entire cost of provision (minus learner contributions) for students in this category is borne by the Council, as none of the major colleges provide their own travel schemes for learners with individual needs in the same way as they do for mainstream learners.

Travel allowances in lieu of provided transport could be tiered according to need and distance from establishment.

As an illustrative snapshot, in May 2016 242 learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disability were travelling under the scheme. If all these learners were instead provided a £2,000 annual travel allowance, there would be a saving of more than £500,000.

Schools and colleges would be encouraged to develop their own transport schemes for their learners with individual needs in the same way as they have for mainstream learners, which the learners' personal transport budgets could be used to support.

## Letting us know your views

The consultation will run from Friday 3 February 2017 until Friday 17 March 2017.

You can let us know your views in one of three ways:

- Complete and return the online feedback form available at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/collegetransport](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/collegetransport)
- Email: [post16consultation@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:post16consultation@cornwall.gov.uk)
- Write to: Policy and Organisation Manager, West 3, New County Hall, Truro, TR1 3AY.

## What happens next?

After review of the feedback received, the Council's full proposed Post-16 Transport Policy for 2017/18 will be published in line with statutory requirements by 31 May 2017.

The proposed policy will be reviewed and a final decision made by the new Cabinet of Cornwall Council in June 2017.

If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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Treyew Road  
Truro TR1 3AY**

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