Somerset County Council

Consultation on the proposed changes to:

Education Travel Policy 2017
Somerset County Council

Consultation on the proposed changes to the Education Travel Policy

Autumn 2017

Summary

Somerset County Council currently has an Education Travel Policy which is reviewed every 2 years to ensure it meets legislation and Department for Education (DFE) guidance. During this revision exercise we will be aiming to reduce the size of the document and ensure the policy is clear and easy to understand.

In light of the financial pressures facing the authority, we will also be proposing to remove the final few discretionary elements from the policy. (Discretionary transport is not statutory and decisions are made by the Local Authority on how we manage and apply this discretion).

On grounds of ‘Legitimate Expectation’, policy changes will only affect new pupils starting school for the first time and those children who are changing schools, for example, moving from a primary school to a secondary school.

The Local Authority wants your views on the proposed changes to its Education Travel Policy. The consultation will run for 6 weeks during autumn term.

A further formal decision will be required once the consultation has been completed in order to approve a revised policy following consideration of the feedback received as part of the consultation process. Any changes to the policy will be introduced from September 2018.

Protections

Pupils who currently receive discretionary travel assistance will continue to receive this until they reach the end of their compulsory education, change home address or transfer to another school.

A summary of the proposed changes is as follows:
1. **Provision of Passenger Assistants**

Currently, Passenger Assistants are allocated following a risk assessment Process. To underline this process we will be making this clearer within the Policy. The wording for this will be as follows:

A passenger assistant will only be provided following the outcome of an assessment of the child’s Special Educational Needs and/or medical needs in order to make suitable provision for children travelling to and from school. This determination will be made by the Senior Transport Officers within Transporting Somerset taking into account:

- A child’s medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required.
- Where an individual child’s needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle.
- Where an assessment of the children on the vehicle and the journey to be undertaken highlight a clear danger or health and safety risk to all passengers on the vehicle.

The consideration for passenger assistants will be made by Senior Transport Officers with Transporting Somerset on evidence received from all relevant parties and will be reviewed regularly.

2. **Split Families**

From September 2018 we propose to remove transport entitlement from split-residence families (where a child’s parents live separately). In future, travel assistance will only be assessed and awarded from the address which is registered with the school as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant school admission application form.

3. **Travel Assistance on Grounds of Religion or Belief**

We propose that from September 2018 travel assistance will be removed for those attending faith schools unless that school is the child’s nearest or catchment school and is over minimum statutory walking distance. The authority will continue to meet its duty to provide free home to school transport to faith schools for pupils who have extended rights by virtue of being from low income families. Pupils who currently receive discretionary travel assistance will continue to receive this until they reach the end of their compulsory education, change home address or transfer to another school.

4. **Withdrawal of School Transport – Behaviour**

The content relating to the suspension and removal of travel assistance due to behavioural reasons will be changed to provide clear information on when this support will be removed in line with the thresholds within the new policy. This will remove any confusion and grounds for challenge as well as giving the Transport Officers the authority to implement the policy.
5. **Low Income**
The content relating to Low Income will be revised to reflect new guidance and ensure policy aligns with the implementation of Universal Credit. This means that the Local Authority will be accepting Universal Credit to evidence low income.

6. **Waiting Time on School Premises**
Currently we state that waiting time on school premises is a maximum guideline of 15 minutes for pupils. From September 2018 we propose this will only apply to primary/middle school pupils. This will allow more flexibility to manage the transport more effectively.

7. **Late applications for School Admissions**
The policy will be amended to raise awareness of the impact to the school transport budget due to late applicants. We propose that if a late application has resulted in the child being placed in a school which is neither their nearest or catchment school and if travel assistance is agreed it may take half a term before it is in place.

8. **Temporary Medical Need**
Currently as part of our discretionary policy we will consider limited travel assistance for a child suffering from a temporary medical condition, illness or injury to any school even if this is not the nearest school to the home address or the designated transport area school. From September 2018 we propose only to consider travel assistance to a child’s nearest or designated transport area school.

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**Responding to the consultation**

The Local Authority wants to hear your views and you can respond to the consultation by:

Completing the questionnaire section of this document and sending it to:

Debbie Reed Commissioning Officer for School Transport. C402c, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY.

Completing the on-line consultation questionnaire at


The closing date for responses is 15th December 2017.
What happens at the end of this consultation period?

All responses will be considered and the decision will be made following the analysis in February/March 2018.

The Local Authority will communicate its plans following the assessment of the responses to the consultation.

Should you require this document in another format (language, large print, easy read) please call Debbie Reed, Schools Commissioning Team on 01823 355804 or email Dreed@somerset.gov.uk

Questionnaire

About You

Please let us know if you are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent / Carer</th>
<th>Yes / No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher / School Representative</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil / Student</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify below)</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are a Pupil / Student or a Parent / Carer, please let us know if you or your child attends:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catchment School</th>
<th>Yes / No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preferred School</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 16 provision</td>
<td>Yes / No</td>
</tr>
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Proposals

1. Provision of Passenger Assistants

Currently, Passenger Assistants are allocated following a risk assessment Process. To underline this process we will be making this clearer within the Policy. The wording for this will be as follows:

A passenger assistant will only be provided following the outcome of an assessment of the child’s Special Educational Needs and/or medical needs in order to make suitable provision for children travelling to and from school. This determination will be made by the Senior Transport Officers within Transporting Somerset taking into account:

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- Where an assessment of the children on the vehicle and the journey to be undertaken highlight a clear danger or health and safety risk to all passengers on the vehicle.

The consideration for passenger assistants will be made by Senior Transport Officers with Transporting Somerset on evidence received from all relevant parties and will be reviewed regularly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you agree with this proposal</th>
<th>Yes / No / Don’t know</th>
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If you have any comments on the above please enter them in the box below:
2. Split Families

From September 2018 we will be removing transport entitlement from split-residence families (where a child’s parents live separately). In future, travel assistance will only be assessed and awarded from the address which is registered with the school as the home address or, prior to admission, the address used on the relevant school admission application form. Protection arrangements will be in place for those pupils currently accessing school transport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does your child currently receive transport from 2 addresses</th>
<th>Yes / No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with this proposal</td>
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If you have any comments on question 2, please enter them in the box below:

3. Travel Assistance on Grounds of Religion or Belief

We propose that from September 2018 travel assistance will be removed for those attending faith schools unless that school is the child’s nearest or catchment school and is over minimum statutory walking distance. The authority will continue to meet its duty to provide free home to school transport to faith schools for pupils who have extended rights by virtue of being from low income families. Pupils who currently receive discretionary travel assistance will continue to receive this until they reach the end of their compulsory education, change home address or transfer to another school.

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<th>Does your child currently receive transport on grounds of religion or belief</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree with this proposal</td>
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If you have any comments on question 3, please enter them in the box below:

4. Withdrawal of School Transport – Behaviour

The content relating to the suspension and removal of travel assistance due to behavioural reasons will be changed to provide clear information on when this support will be removed in line with the thresholds within the new policy. This will remove any confusion and grounds for challenge as well as giving the Transport Officers the authority to implement the policy.

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If you have any comments on this proposal, please enter them in the box below:
5. Waiting Time on School Premises

Currently we state that waiting time on school premises is a maximum guideline of 15 minutes for pupils. From September 2018 this will only apply to primary/middle school pupils. This will allow more flexibility to manage the transport more effectively.

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The policy will be amended to raise awareness of the impact to the school transport budget due to late applicants. We propose that if a late application has resulted in the child being placed in a school which is neither their nearest or catchment school and if travel assistance is agreed it may take half a term before it is in place.

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7. Temporary Medical Need

Currently as part of our discretionary policy we will consider limited travel assistance for a child suffering from a temporary medical condition, illness or injury to any school even if this is not the nearest school to the home address or the designated transport area school. From September 2018 we propose only to consider travel assistance to a child’s nearest or designated transport area school.

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If you have any comments on this proposal, please enter them in the box below:

Thank you for giving your feedback. The Council will communicate the decision once all responses have been taken into consideration and the new policy is published.