

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

25th March - 20th May 2011

Cheshire East Council
School Transport Consultation (GB)
Children & Families Service
Dalton House
Dalton Way
Middlewich
Cheshire CW10 0HU

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools

INTRODUCTION

Cheshire East Council wants the best for all children and families and is working hard to provide services that meet their needs. However, like all councils, we have to make difficult decisions about what services we can keep and which, sadly, we can no longer afford.

Much of what we do is statutory, i.e. there is a law that tells us that we must do it. This means that when we need to cut our costs, we have to look at those areas that are non-statutory, i.e. where we provide services because we feel they make a difference to our local communities. One of these areas is school transport. Some of this we must provide by law and we will continue to do so, but for other areas, we are looking at making changes to the services we provide.

We know that these changes will affect many families within Cheshire East and we need to know, before we make these decisions, what the impact will be. It would help us if you would read about our proposals and let us have your thoughts on them by completing our questionnaire or feeding back to us direct at our drop-in sessions.

BACKGROUND

The Council spends in the region of £10 million on home to school transport. A review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy is required as a result of the tight financial framework within which all local authorities are now operating. Post 16 travel and denominational travel account for 15 per cent of the overall expenditure – more than a million pounds each year. As a consequence it is proposed that our school travel policy is reviewed and a public consultation carried out.

Statutory Provision - There are some pupils for whom the Local Authority (LA) must provide transport. These groups are set out in law. This includes children of statutory school age who live in Cheshire East and who attend their catchment area or nearest school, where the distance from home to school is over the Council's defined walking distance:

- More than 2 miles from home for children attending primary school ; and
- More than 3 miles from home for children attending secondary school

In addition, there are a number of groups that are, and will continue to be, eligible for school transport. These 'eligible groups' are set out at Appendix 1.

Discretionary Provision - Any school transport provided over and above the statutory provision is discretionary, i.e. it is up to the Council whether or not they chose to offer this. The Council is currently providing some school transport services that are deemed discretionary, including:

- Post 16 transport;
- Some denominational transport; and
- The post 16 element of the Complex and Special Needs Policy.

PROPOSALS

The proposed changes to discretionary provision are set out below:

Proposal 1 –	To increase the charge for <u>existing users of subsidised denominational transport</u> from £299 to £385 from September 2011
Proposal 2 –	To increase the charge for <u>new intake for subsidised denominational transport</u> from £299 to £385 from September 2011
Proposal 3 –	To withdraw <u>subsidised denominational transport</u> from September 2012
Proposal 4 –	To increase the charge for <u>subsidised post-16 mainstream</u> travel from £415 to £500 from September 2011
Proposal 5 –	To withdraw <u>subsidised post-16 mainstream</u> travel from September 2012
Proposal 6 –	To charge for <u>subsidised post-16 complex and special needs</u> travel from September 2011

CONSULTEES

The following groups/individuals will be asked for their views on these proposals:

- All parents/carers of children resident in Cheshire East currently receiving free or subsidised transport to denominational schools (including the parents of pupils due to join Year 7 at a denominational secondary school in September 2011 and who are eligible under the current policy for subsidised transport)
- The Diocesan authorities
- All headteachers and governing bodies of Cheshire East maintained primary , secondary and special schools (including denominational schools)
- All headteachers and governing bodies of denominational schools in neighbouring authorities where there are children resident in Cheshire East attending currently
- Academies in Cheshire East
- All Cheshire East Elected Members
- Neighbouring local authorities' Directors of Children's Services
- Members of the Youth Parliament
- Colleges of Further Education
- Unions and Professional Associations

RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

We would like to hear your views. In addition to this document we have produced a list of Frequently Asked Questions. You can either:

- Complete the consultation online at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools
- Complete a paper copy and return to the following address:

Cheshire East Council
School Transport Consultation (GB)
Children & Families Service
Dalton House, Dalton Way
Middlewich Cheshire CW10 0HU

- Email any comments/forms to stp@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Tell us face to face at one of our drop in sessions that will be taking place across the borough. You can attend at any point during the session and Council staff will be on hand to answer questions and record your feedback.

•

Date	Times	Venue
Tuesday 5th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Assembly Room Macclesfield Town Hall Macclesfield SK10 1DP
Thursday 7th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Alexandra Suite Crewe Alexandra Football Club Gresty Road Crewe CW2 6EB
Wednesday 13th April 2011	2-4pm 5-8pm	Creche Room Hall Middlewich Community Church 34-36 Brooks Lane Middlewich Cheshire CW10 0JG
Thursday 14th April 2011	4-7pm	Main Hall New Life Church, Danesford Community Centre West Road Congleton CW12 4EY

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

DATE	ACTION
25 March	Consultation Papers published for 8 weeks (to include 2 weeks at Easter)
April	Drop in sessions to take place across Cheshire
20 May	Public Consultation Closes
31 May	Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
6 June	Cabinet Decision on proposals, taking into account consultation responses
By end of June	School Transport Policies revised
End of June 2011	Schools Booklet published
September 2011	First changes made, if agreed
September 2012	All changes implemented

OTHER GROUPS 'ELIGIBLE' FOR FREE SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Age or category of pupil	Statutory entitlement
Pupils of compulsory primary school age up to age 11 (Reception to Y6)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than two miles away, as measured by the shortest available walking route
Secondary school pupils up to age 16 (Yrs 7 – 11)	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school if it is more than three miles away, as measured by the shortest available walking route, including pupils at a place other than a school and excluded pupils, still registered, but receiving education outside of school premises
Secondary pupils aged between 11 and 16 (years 7-11) from families who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit (entitled to free school meals or maximum working tax credits)	Free transport to one of three qualifying secondary schools if it is between two and six miles away as measured by the shortest available walking route. This also applies to pupils registered at a qualifying school which is between 2 and 15 miles away; and whose parent has expressed a wish, based upon their religion or belief, for the child to be provided with education at that school
Pupils of compulsory primary school age or secondary school age who live within the statutory walking distance, but where the nature of the route has been deemed unsafe	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance and where, due to the nature of the route, they are unable to walk in reasonable safety even when accompanied by a responsible person
Pupils of compulsory school age with Special Educational Needs, disability or mobility problems	Free transport to the nearest qualifying school, where the pupil lives within the statutory walking distance and where, due to their special needs or disability or mobility problems, they cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school.