

# Cheshire East Council

## Education Travel Policies Consultation

### Summary of results

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# Introduction

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## Background and Methodology

Between 18<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 the Council undertook an online survey to seek views concerning potential changes to current education travel policies.

The policies affected were:

- Compulsory School Age Travel Policy
- Education Travel Behaviour Code
- Education Travel Payment Policy
- Education Travel Appeals and Complaints Policy

Cheshire East Council proposed to continue to provide at least the legislative minimum that is required to be provided by local authorities regarding these policies.

The survey was advertised in the schools bulletin requesting that it be included in parental newsletters. It was also sent via email to all Headteachers and chairs of Governors within Cheshire East, the Parent Carers Forum, Foster Carers, Parish and Town Councils, Chester and Shrewsbury Dioceses and other community groups. There were also media briefings and on the Cheshire East Website and through the Council's Twitter account. A total of 184 complete responses were received.

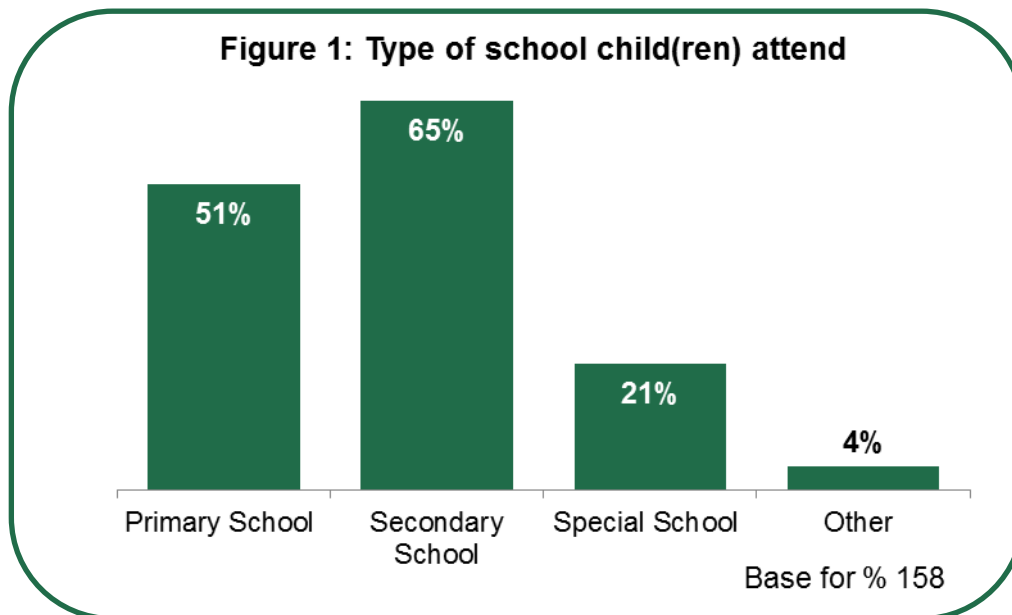
In addition, 3 responses were received via email, 2 from Parish Councils and 1 from an employee at Cycling UK. One letter was received from Cheshire West and Chester Council suggesting a continuation of cross borough collaboration to reduce education travel costs.

*Please note: respondents could select more than one box for certain questions and therefore percentages may not add up to 100.*

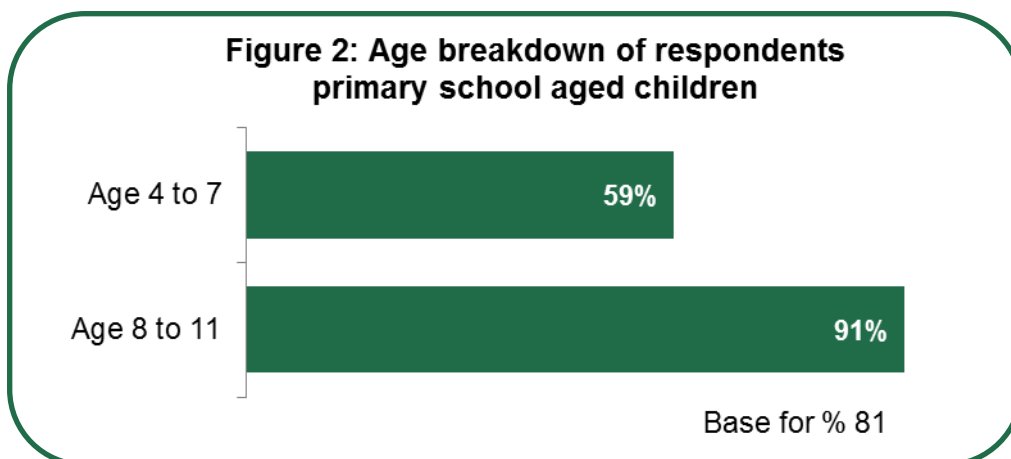
# Analysis of Results

## Profile of respondents

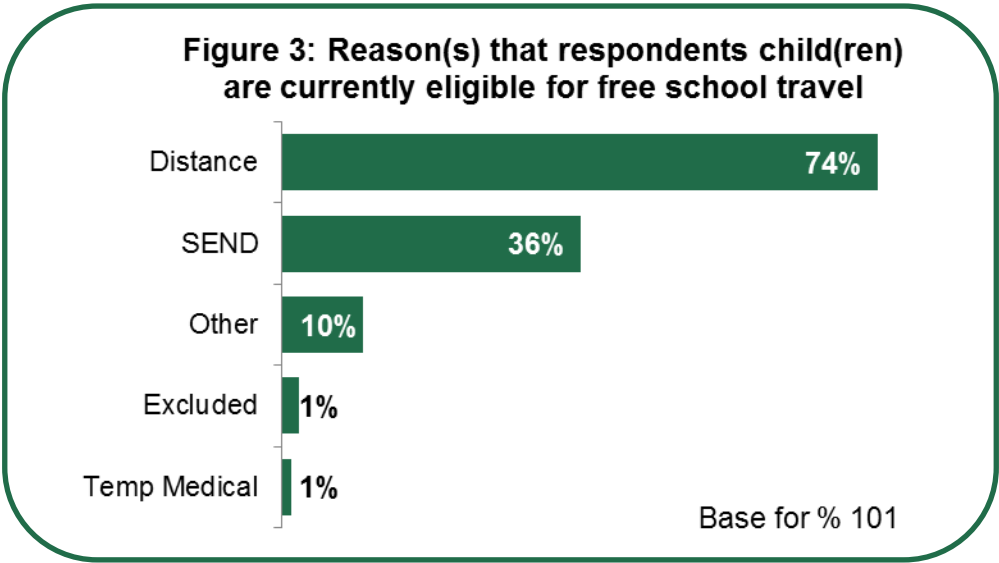
The majority of respondents had/ cared for one or more children (86%, 158 respondents). Of those who had/cared for children, 51%, had/cared for children who currently attend primary school and 65% had/cared for children currently attending secondary school as shown in figure 1.



Those respondents who had/ cared for primary school aged children were asked what age groups they were within (one of the proposed new policies affects those aged 8 to 11 travelling over 2 miles (but less than 3 miles) to the nearest school). Out of the 81 respondents who had or cared for children currently in primary school the majority (91%) had or cared for children aged between 8 to 11 as figure 2 shows.

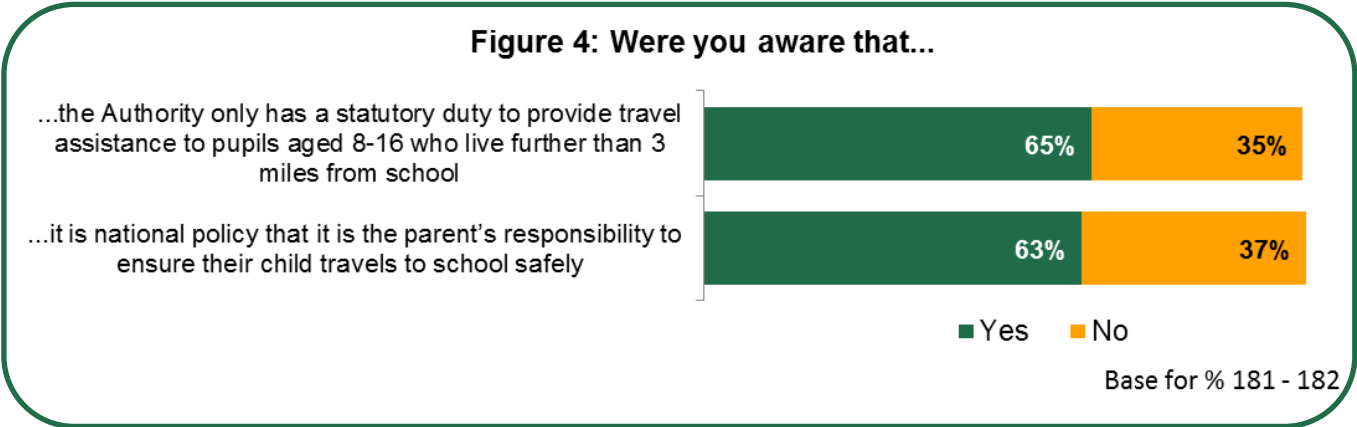


Two thirds of respondents (64%, 101 respondents) who had/ cared for children currently receive free school transport to school. Of those who receive free transport to school, the majority, 74%, received it due to the distance from the school as shown in figure 2.



**National Policy/ Statutory Duty**

Respondents were asked if they were aware that the authority only has a statutory duty to provide travel assistance to pupils aged 8-16 who live further than 3 miles from school and whether they aware of the national policy that states it is the parent’s responsibility to ensure their child travels to school safely. Around two thirds of respondents stated ‘yes’ they were aware of each statement as figure 4 shows.



## Proposed changes to current policies

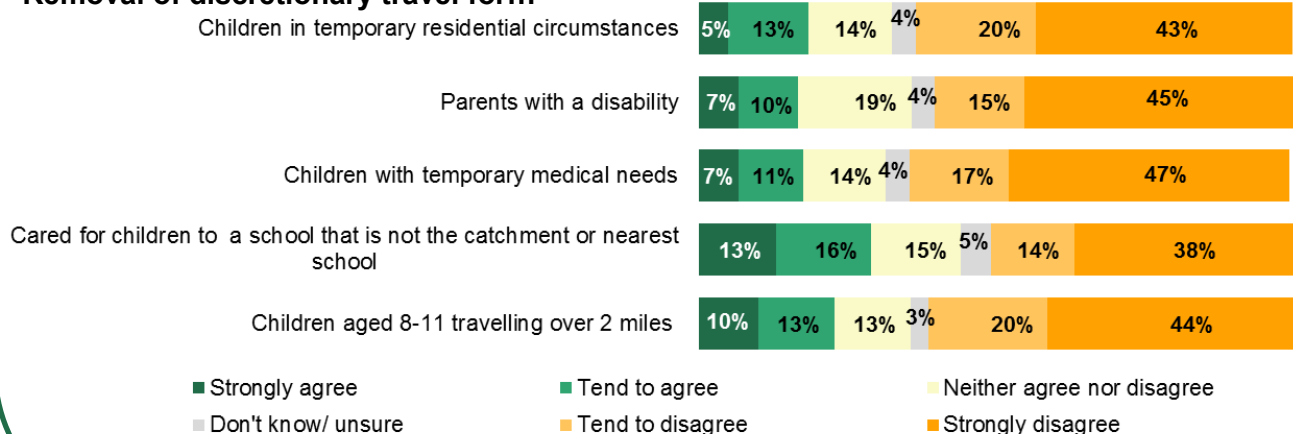
Respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with the proposed new policies that were highlighted within the draft document which would bring the Council in line with statutory guidance. Some of the changes were revisions to current policies while others were the removal of current discretionary (as opposed to statutory) travel. Figure 5 shows the results.

**Figure 5: Agreement/ disagreement with the proposed new policies**

### Revisions to ...



### Removal of discretionary travel for...



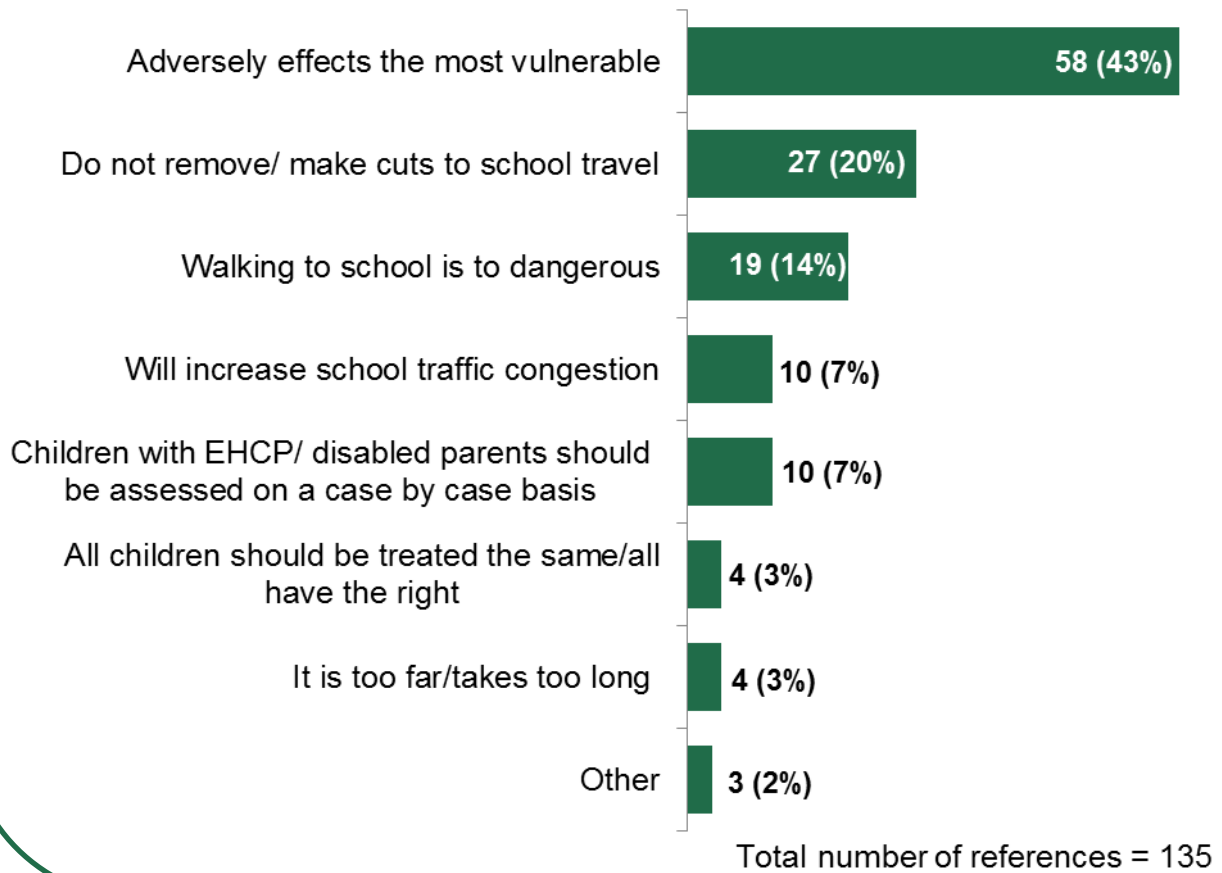
Base for % 181 - 184

If respondents disagreed with any of the proposed new policies they were asked to explain why. 113 respondents left a valid comment. Comments have been grouped into overall themes for the purpose of this report as shown in table 1. 58 respondents felt that the policies adversely affect the most vulnerable with 30 specifically stating it will impact SEN/Disabled groups, 16 specifically stating it will adversely impact cared for children, 5 specifically stating it will impact those with a temporary medical condition and 5 specifically stating it will impact those on low income. *Please note: respondents may have referred to more than one theme in their comment therefore the total count may not add to the total respondents who has left a comment.*

Table 1: If you have disagreed with any of the above, please explain why:			
Theme	Typical comment	Count	%
Adversely effects the most vulnerable e.g. those who are disabled, low income families, looked after children. They should be helped with free school travel if they need it.	<i>'All of the above will adversely affect the most vulnerable of our society i.e. disabled children &amp; adults and low income families'</i>	58	43
Do not remove travel/ make the cuts to school travel	<i>'I believe the removal of safe methods of transport to school for any children is wrong. Parents do not have jobs which will just fit around the school run'</i>	27	20
Walking to school is too dangerous/ unsafe routes/ live in a rural area	<i>'CE is a rural county and safe walking routes are not all paved urban areas'</i>	19	14
Children with EHCP/ disabled parents should be assessed on a case by case basis	<i>'Children with EHCP should qualify on a cases by case basis'</i>	10	7
Will increase school traffic congestion	<i>'...There would be additional traffic at a primary school that has not got a car park and only small drop-off/collection point....'</i>	10	7
It is too far/takes too long to walk to school	<i>'Who cares if it's two mile or three miles? It's still far too far...'</i>	4	3
All children should be treated the same/all have the right to transport	<i>'All children should have the right to transport to and from school'</i>	4	3
Other	<i>'Difficult to see the positives in any of this, although improving cycle and walking routes to schools becomes a clear opportunity'</i>	3	2
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>135</b>	<b>100</b>

These overall themes can also be seen in figure 6.

**Figure 6: Reasons for disagreement with proposed new policies**



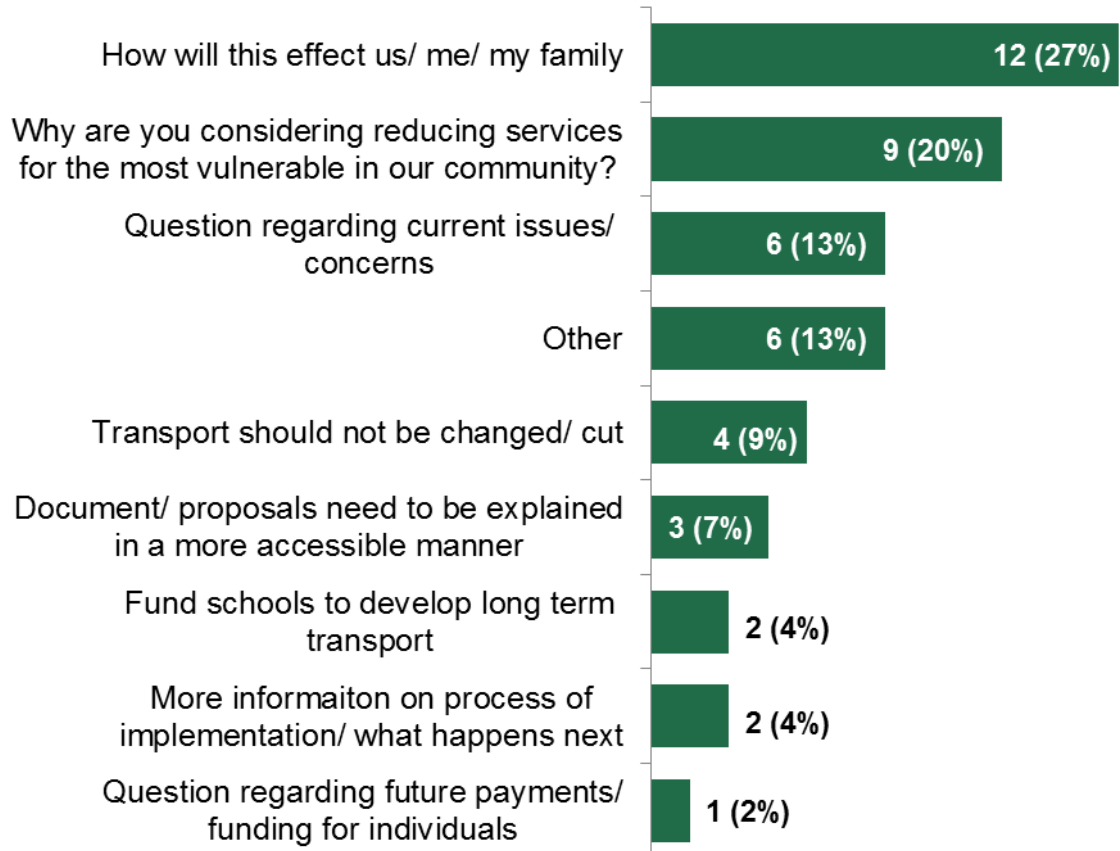
Respondents were asked if they had any specific queries about the proposed new policies. 43 respondents left a valid comment. 12 respondents wanted to know specifically how it would affect them/ their family. Table 2 shows the full breakdown of comments received for this question.

<b>Table 2: Do you have any specific queries about the proposed new policies?</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Typical comment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
How will this affect us/ me/ my family	<i>'How will this directly affect us? Your proposal is very vague'</i>	12	27
Why are you considering reducing services for the most vulnerable in our community?	<i>'Why are you considering reducing services for the most vulnerable members of our communities? These are children and young people who are either disabled or Vulnerable due to no fault of their own... '</i>	9	20
Question regarding current issues/ concerns	<i>'There seems to be no specific reference to crossing 'county' borders' (...) we spend £17 per academic week on his transport without assistance for the last 5 years. Over 3 miles ruling does not apply'.</i>	6	13
Other query/ concern	<i>'Will a separate consultation be held in relation to post 16 transport provision?'</i>	6	13
Transport should not be changed/ cut	<i>'I feel strongly that transport for children to a special school should not be cut or changed'</i>	4	9
Document/ proposals need to be explained in a more accessible manner	<i>'The policy by its nature and language excludes the less educated. You have not explained your language or direction of intended travel in an easily accessible manner'</i>	3	7
More information on the process of implementation/ on what happens next?	<i>'Are these policies just a proposal for consultation, and if not, what is the way forward for implementation?'</i>	2	4
Fund schools to develop long term transport	<i>'Can schools not be given some funding to develop own transport?'</i>	2	4
Question regarding payments and funding for individuals	<i>'Do disability payments include settlement for travel difficulties?'</i>	1	2
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>100</b>

These overall themes can also be seen in figure 7.



**Figure 7: Specific queries about proposed new policies**



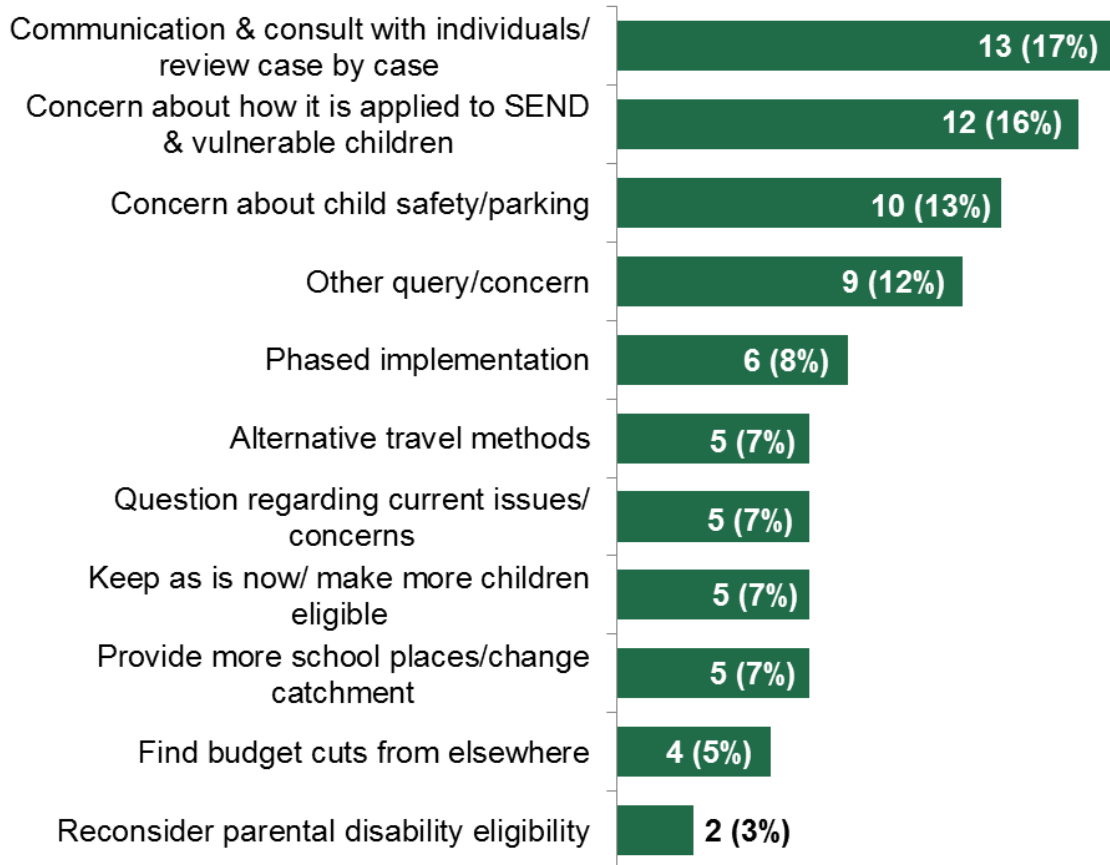
Total number of references = 45

Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions on how to best implement the proposed policies which the Council propose to apply from September 2018. 63 respondents left a valid comment. The comments have been grouped into themes as seen in table 3.

<b>Table 3: Do you have any suggestions on to how best to implement the proposed policies which we will seek to apply to pupils from September 2018?</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Typical comment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Communication and consult with individuals (review case by case)	<i>'Go through a process of consultation, and assess each case independently, to find the best way forward for society and for each child.'</i>	13	17
Concern about how it is applied to SEND and vulnerable children	<i>'Don't implement the proposed policies if they are going to penalise the most in need and the most vulnerable in our county if humanity and common decency is a value we wish to uphold in our borough!!'</i>	12	16
Concern about child safety/parking	<i>'Don't go ahead with this, it puts too many children in danger.'</i>	10	13
Other query/concern	<i>'you are contradicting yourselves ,you say will seek to apply ,this means like bus review you take very little notice of the Cheshire East taxpayers or residents.'</i>	9	12
Phased implementation	<i>'Phase in a reduced subsidy scheme. Thereby allowing parents and schools time to work out alternative shared travel arrangements.'</i>	6	8
Provide more school places/change catchment	<i>'Make more school places available through better funding.'</i>	5	7
Keep as is now or make more children eligible for free home to school travel	<i>'All children who are currently eligible for school transport because of the distance they live from their catchment school should still continue to receive it.'</i>	5	7
Question regarding current issues/ concerns	<i>'Keep things as they currently are and make cuts to the .... to make the savings rather than targeting the most vulnerable in the county.'</i>	5	7
Alternative travel methods - public buses, direct payments and invest in cycle routes	<i>'Why not use the kids to look at how they currently get to school and how they could. Barriers? Promote change. Work in partnership with others. Be a role model for other councils with regards travel in general.'</i>	5	7
Find budget cuts from elsewhere	<i>'...These proposed cuts should be scrapped as were the proposals about car parking charges increase. We are talking about similar savings.'</i>	4	5
Reconsider parental disability eligibility	<i>'Children who do not have a safe travel alternative to school i.e. no pavements or local bus service should be provided a free bus service. Some parents cannot transport their children because of disability or inability to drive, without this free bus service the children will suffer.'</i>	2	3
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

These overall themes can also be seen in figure 8.

**Figure 8: Suggestions on how to best implement the proposed policies**

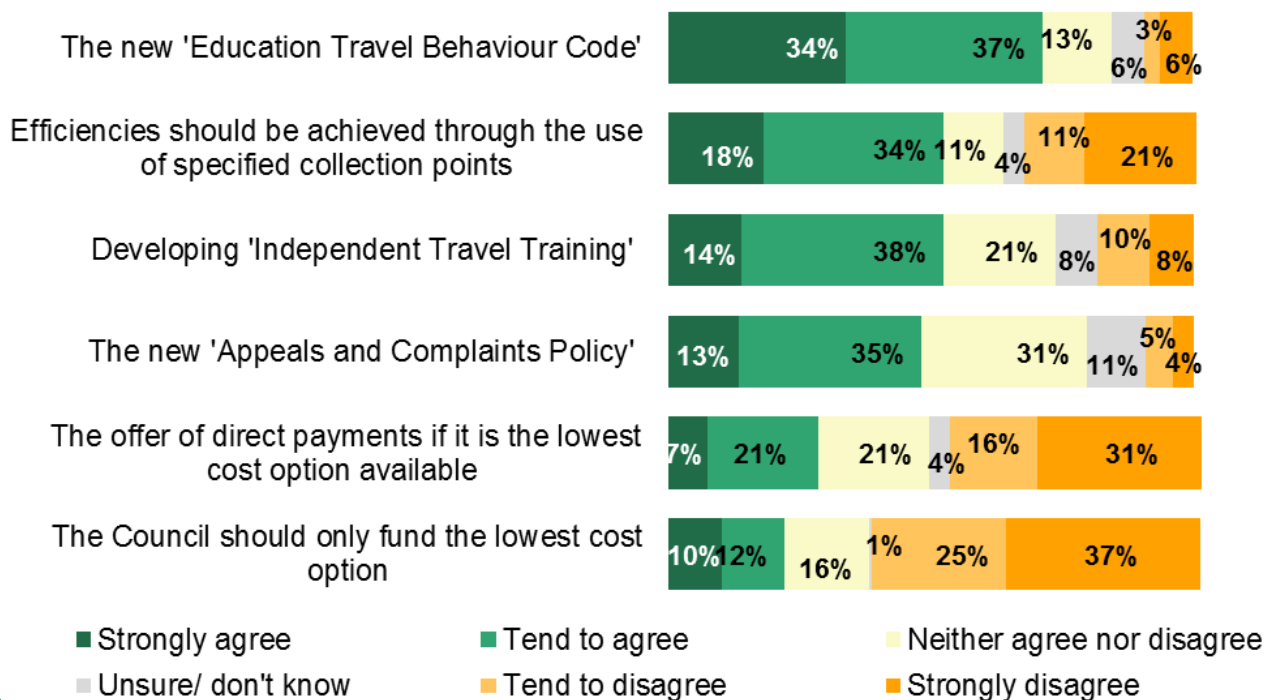


Total number of references = 76

## Additional proposals

Respondents were also asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the additional proposals that were highlighted within the draft document. Responses can be seen in figure 9.

**Figure 9: Agreement/ disagreement with the following proposals**



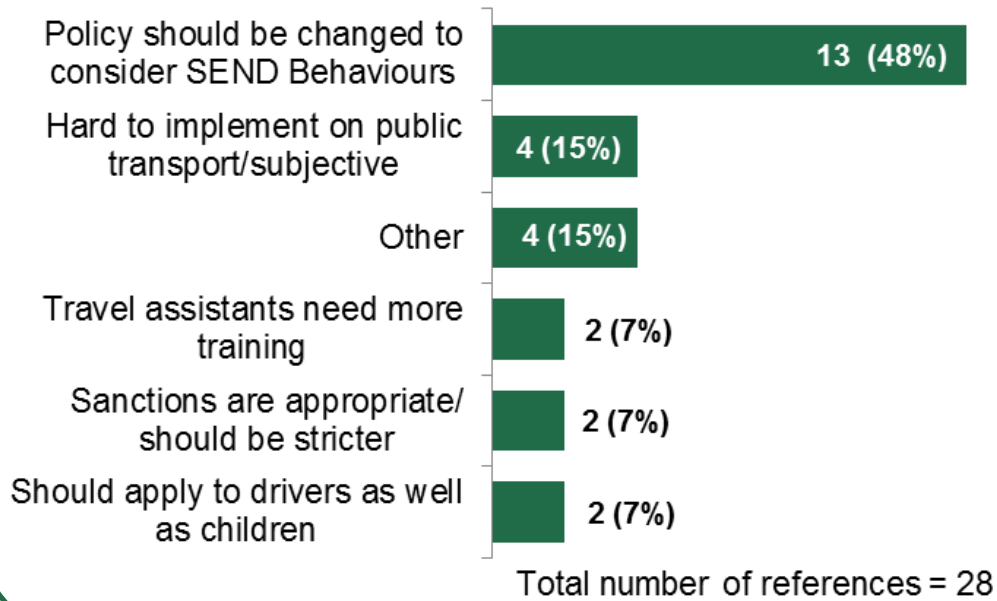
Base for % 181 - 184

Respondents were asked if they considered the sanctions in the 'Education Travel Behaviour Code' to be appropriate. 22 respondents left a valid comment; these comments have been grouped into themes as shown in table 4.

<b>Table 4: Do you consider the sanctions in the 'Education Travel Behaviour Code' to be appropriate?</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Typical comment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Policy should be changed to consider SEND Behaviours	<i>'... Behaviour difficulties can be more than just "bad behaviour". They can serve a purpose for the pupil in terms of being a method of communication, an indication of pain,, a way of leaving a situation that is proving stressful for the person. Please remember many of the pupils you are transporting are non verbal and on the bus may only have behaviour as a means of expressing themselves'</i>	13	48
Other	<i>'These are only children and need to be looked after and supported and given the best starts we can give them'</i>	4	15
Hard to implement on public transport/subjective	<i>'... When there have been issues on a public bus in the past, the school has not been willing to take any action and passes it directly to the bus company who then take no action.'</i>	4	15
It should apply to the drivers as well as children	<i>'The code should apply to drivers too. My daughter has had excellent taxi drivers except for one, who used bad language as a matter of course. this was a disgraceful example to SEN children (it was reported)'</i>	2	7
Sanctions are appropriate or should be stricter	<i>'The sanctions are appropriate, but there is nothing in the policy about compliance governance. It does not explain how the policy will be enforced....'</i>	2	7
Travel assistants need more training	<i>'...Travel assistants need more training to enable them to deal with the children with compassion and professionalism when in the situation that the child is not actually misbehaving...'</i>	2	7
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>100</b>

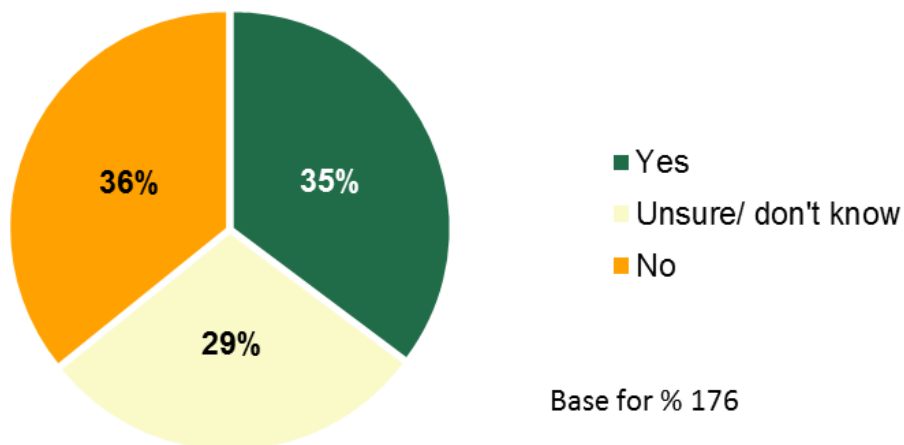
These overall themes can also be seen in figure 10.

**Figure 10: Comments on 'Education Travel Behaviour Code'**



Just over one third (35%) of respondents would consider purchasing a spare seat on a bus if they were not eligible for free school transport, as figure 11 shows.

**Figure 11: Would you consider purchasing a spare seat on a bus...?**

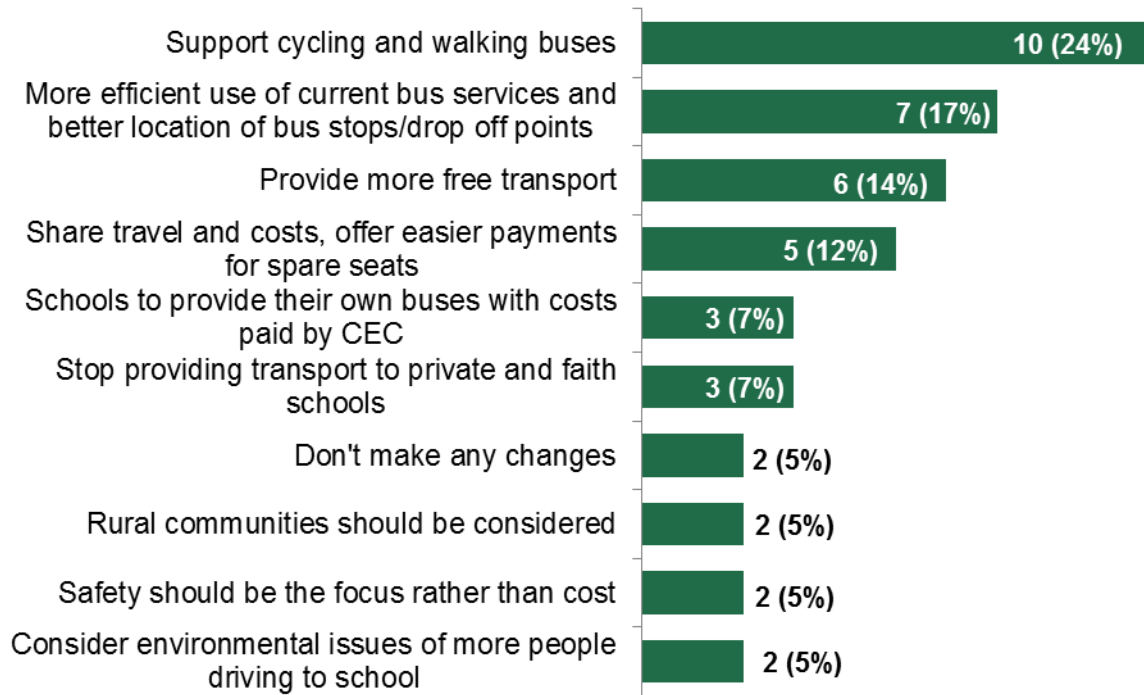


Respondents were asked if they could think of any more efficient or effective methods of travel support which haven't been included within the policy. 42 respondents left a valid comment; these can be seen within table 5.

<b>Table 5: Are there any other more efficient or effective methods of travel support which are not included?</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Typical comment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Support cycling and walking buses	<i>'One-off capital investment in remedying unsafe pinch points in the cycle network will enable lasting self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating, self propelled journeys to school, which cost the Council nothing in subsequent years...'</i>	10	24
More efficient use of current bus services and better location of bus stops/drop off points	<i>'Specific Drop off points and picking up points within school boundaries at specific times.'</i>	7	17
Provide more free transport	<i>'I feel that all children should be able to travel to school by bus free of charge.'</i>	6	14
Share travel and costs, offer easier payments for spare seats	<i>'Lack of provision of transport and unaffordability can be really stressful. Sharing costs can arguably be better than removal of provision.'</i>	5	12
Stop providing transport to private and faith schools	<i>'Stop any Council funded transport to private schools, irrespective of the EHCP. Private education is a choice for which you do not pay the fees ( I hope) so why should you pay for transport.'</i>	3	7
Schools to provide their own buses with costs paid by CEC	<i>'...Special schools could be given funding towards providing transport for under 16's if they are already providing a post 16 option and it is part of their transport route.'</i>	3	7
Consider environmental issues of more people driving to school	<i>'...more school buses rather than fewer would give positive environmental impact, improve children`s independence and decrease cost for road maintenance due to a reduction in vehicle movements and potential accidents.'</i>	2	5
Safety should be the focus rather than cost	<i>'...The council should not be focused on cost....it should be focused on safety. The option of direct payments could be abused by parents who take the money for other purposes and send the children walking. '</i>	2	5
Rural communities should be considered	<i>'The government need to fund school transport appropriately for rural communities'</i>	2	5
Don't make any changes	<i>'Leave it as it is! .... . Lots of children with disabilities find it hard to adapt to change...'</i>	2	5
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>

These overall themes can also be seen in figure 12.

**Figure 12: Suggestions for other more efficient/ effective methods of travel support**



Total number of references= 42



Finally respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make. 65 respondents left a valid comment; the breakdown of these comments can be seen in table 6.

<b>Table 6: Any other comments?</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Typical comment</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Special requirements for SEND pupils should be considered	<i>'...Collection points will not work for pupils with severe learning and physical disabilities....'</i>	12	14
Other	<i>'...Reducing the bus travel will have a detrimental affect on the school intake...'</i>	12	14
Proposed cuts target the most vulnerable	<i>'The councils proposals to supply the lowest cost transport is shocking ,SEN children need consistency with transport who have good knowledge of the behaviour of these types of children not the cheapest ...'</i>	10	12
Rural considerations	<i>'please be aware of the further impact on small rural schools and the pupil numbers'</i>	8	9
Look elsewhere for savings	<i>'I'm always concerned when the Council tries to save money by cutting services to vulnerable groups of residents. If it is not the elderly, it is those with a disability or children. These three groups of people are the least able to defend themselves and it seems that they are targeted for cuts...'</i>	7	8
Consultation and tendering process	<i>'Have any parents of children with SEND actually been consulted on this???'</i>	7	8
Difficult for parents to provide transport for multiple children	<i>'...Coordinating 3 separate drop offs to school in the morning and pickups is impossible especially for working parents. It is unfair on the non SEN child to always be put second to the child more in need. It also has a massive impact on family life if you need to spend 90 min dropping 2 children to breakfast clubs to get your child in need to school'</i>	6	7
Better consultation (i.e. Face to face)	<i>'Please consult face to face and present all the options - this method of consultation is not enough'</i>	5	6
Use of alternative travel arrangements, public transport, cycling	<i>'Many parents seem to believe that driving their children to school is the responsible thing to do. I would argue that the reverse is true. The government has declared two health emergencies: childhood obesity and air pollution...'</i>	5	6
Safety considerations	<i>'My 17 year old now has to cycle a dangerous 3 mile route because although his further studies are compulsory, you have no obligation to provide the transport he had in yr11. We have bought spare seats for him in y12 but now we have been refused them. ... I now worry about his safety twice a day...'</i>	3	4
Cost & availability	<i>'All school bus services when paying or not paying for the bus should guarantee a seat, this does not happen on most school buses and many of the children have to stand up all the way to school....'</i>	3	4
Post 16 travel question/comment	<i>'Don't know how my child will get to school post 16 no direct bus there.'</i>	3	4

Support for the need to move to statutory, accept parental responsibility	<i>'...But I support the need to move to statutory supply and reduction of discretionary supply - after all parents are responsible for getting their children to school.'</i>	2	2
All children should have free bus travel	<i>'You should offer help with travel for all pupils going to schools outside catchment area, regardless of reason.'</i>	2	2
<b>Total number of references</b>		<b>85</b>	<b>100</b>

These overall themes can also be seen in figure 13.

