

Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

Front Sheet:

Directorate and Service Area:

Children, Education & Families

What is being assessed (eg name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):

Home to School Transport Policy

Responsible owner / senior officer:

Neil Darlington, Admuissions & Transport Services Manager

Date of assessment:

This was initiated as a working document on 28 May 2013 and is being kept under review.

Summary of judgement:

The proposed Home to School Transport Policy is more equitable than the current policy and offers the prospect of significant savings in council expenditure.

Detail of Assessment:

Purpose of assessment:

The purpose of the assessment is to assess the impact of proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy for 2013 and 2014.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions:

- o Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- o Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- o Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person’s disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Context / Background:

The current policy provides for free travel to the designated (catchment) school if it is over statutory walking distance as well as to the nearest school. For most children the designated (catchment) school is the nearest school and therefore some children receive favourable treatment. This more favourable treatment is not related to low family income or section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”).

Proposals:

The decision to review these discretionary elements was made in the light of the current difficult financial situation in the UK, the continuing impact this will have on local government finances, and the need to ensure that the Home to School Transport Policy is equitable. The following proposals options for change are shown below and the Cabinet will consider on 16 July 2013 whether they should be agreed in whole or in part:

1. To increase the charges for concessionary travel and post 16 travel in 2014/15 to £290.40 (£96.80 per two terms of the 6 term year) for those who live under 3 miles from the school attended and £541.20 per annum (£180.40 per two terms of the 6 term year) for those who live over 3 miles from the school attended (Proposal 1).
2. From 2015 onwards, to increase the concessionary fare by 2% per annum (Proposal 2). This is likely to lead to an increased income of £4,000.
3. From September 2014 to end the waiving of the concessionary charge for the third and subsequent children of families where they have more than two children using the same home to school transport service (Proposal 3).
4. To only use the guidance issued by Road Safety GB when making risk assessments of walked routes to school (Proposal 4)
5. The phased ending of free travel to the designated (catchment) school if the distance from home to school is over 3 miles if aged 8 or over, or 2 miles if less than aged 8 and of school age *if it is not the nearest school*. This would take effect from September 2014. Those children for whom free transport has been agreed before that date will not be affected by any policy changes (Proposal 5).
6. To reassess routes designated as “unsafe walking routes” over 2013/14 and 2014/15 against the guidance issued by Road Safety GB. The first routes to be reassessed in the period September 2013 to January 2014
7. To remove references to collaborative learning transport from the home to school Travel policy. This type of transport was provided because of an

initiative of the previous Government and collaborative learning partnerships have now been discontinued (Proposal 7).

8. To adopt a two stage review/appeal process from September 2013 in accordance with the Department for Education Transport and Travel Guidance of March 2013 (Proposal 8).

Evidence / Intelligence:

The proposal to increase the concessionary fares by 10% for 2014 and to raise them by 2% per annum in 2015 and in succeeding years is intended to reduce the subsidy offered to parents whose children use the Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Providing free travel to the nearest school to a child's home address that is over the statutory walking distance is a legal requirement.

However, providing free travel to the designated (catchment) school when it is not the nearest school is discretionary. This policy is also inequitable since as a result some children are entitled to free travel to a school that is not the nearest school as well as free travel to the nearest school while other families are denied free travel to any other school than the nearest school.

There would need to be a phased introduction but after 5 years this could lead to savings of £0.350 million.

Alternatives considered / rejected:

Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.

The decision to review the discretionary elements within the policy was made in the light of the current difficult financial situation in the UK, the continuing impact this will have on local government finances, and the need to ensure that the Home to School Transport Policy is equitable.

Proposals 1 and 2 are concerned with the way in which the Council will determine increases to concessionary fares. The current arrangements do not give security as to what future increases will be and they are not considered to be fit for purpose.

Currently an additional subsidy is provided to those with three or more children travelling on the same home to school transport. Continuing with this arrangement would be inequitable since it involves a small number of families receiving a higher level of subsidy. Proposal 3 involves discontinuing this arrangement.

Proposal 4 simply makes explicit current practice. It also represents good practice to use national road safety guidance when making decisions on route safety. Proposal

6 is linked to Proposal 4 and is intended to be explicit regarding the period within which routes would be reviewed.

Regarding Proposal 5, the catchment areas of academies and other own admission authority schools cannot be constrained by the Council and simply continuing with the current arrangements would involve a significant financial risk. This is because these admission authorities could in the future extend their catchment areas and the wording of the current policy would not allow the Council to do anything other than provide free travel to more young people whose parents then sought places for them in the schools concerned.

Removing references to Collaborative Learning Transport without consultation would have been inappropriate. Continuing to refer to a type of provision that is no longer required would have been confusing to families. Therefore Proposal 7 is to remove references to Collaborative Learning Transport from the Home to School Transport Policy.

With regard to Proposal 8, it would have been contrary to the statutory guidance issued in 2013 for the Council to continue to use a single tier appeals system. If adopted, Proposal 8 will ensure that the Council's appeal arrangements meet the requirements set by the Department for Education.

Impact Assessment:

Impact on Individuals and Communities:

Community / Group being assessed (as per list above – eg age, rural communities – do an assessment for each one on the list)

Summarise the specific requirements and/or potential impact on this community / group, and then highlight the most significant risks and mitigating action that has been or will be taken.

Risks	Mitigations
The reduction of free travel will reduce access to some schools in rural areas.	During the transitional period of 5 years there will be opportunities for paying for concessionary travel on routes transporting children who are entitled to free travel under the current policy.

Impact on Staff:

Risks	Mitigations
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There will be a need for greater manual input prior to making decisions on free travel.	Staffing will need to be increased to ensure the work can be carried out quickly and fairly.

Impact on other Council services:

Risks	Mitigations
None	None required

Impact on providers:

Risks	Mitigations
A small number of schools, in particular secondary schools, may suffer a reduction in applications for entry	Other schools are likely to see a rise in the number of applications.

Action plan:

Action	By When	Person responsible
Review	5 June 2013	Neil Darlington
Review	6 July 2013	Neil Darlington
Review	September 2014	Neil Darlington

Monitoring and review:

Try to be as specific as possible about when the assessment will be reviewed and updated, linking to key dates (for example when consultation outcomes will be available, before a Cabinet decision, at a key milestone in implementation)

Person responsible for assessment: Neil Darlington

Version	Date	Notes (eg Initial draft, amended following consultation)
v.1	28 May 2013	Initial document to support consultation
v.2	6 July 2013	Interim review
v.3	15 July 2013	Review after the extension of the consultation
v.4	September 2014	Review if the policy is agreed by Cabinet