

Shropshire Council
The Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

All Stakeholders and interested parties including
All Schools, Post 16 establishments, Students and parents,
Elected Members and Parish Councils

Date: 19 March 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

Consultation on proposed changes from September 2019 - Travel assistance for SEND Nursery and Post 16 students

Following the Council's Cabinet decision on the 6th March 2019 a six-week consultation will now commence during March and April with various stakeholders including elected Members, schools and colleges, Parent Advocacy groups, Voluntary & Community Sectors and Town & Parish Councils will now take place. Following this period, the results of this consultation will be analysed and compiled before returning to Cabinet on 1 May 2019 for a decision on whether to adopt this policy.

The Council is committed to providing efficient, integrated transport services whilst ensuring that its statutory duties are met.

Any changes would come into effect from 1 September 2019 and will be applicable to new applicants, as with previous practice the removal of provision will be on a phased approach, protecting all those pupils and students entitled within the existing schemes.

Post 16 – Mainstream Sixth Forms and Colleges

- The Council currently provides transport assistance for 200 post 16 students to mainstream school 6th forms or other Further Educational establishments.
- Of the 200 post 16 students receiving transport assistance, 59 students are paying the higher rate of the contribution of £875pa and 141 students are paying the lower rate of contribution of £142.50pa.
- These students are provided with either a bus pass on a public service vehicle or a seat on a school transport contract, this is usually dependent upon which type of Further Education establishment they are attending.
- Transport entitlement is defined as “a student living 3 miles or more from their designated FE establishment”.

- We do not normally offer bespoke transport solutions such as minibuses or taxis.

Post 16 – SEND Students

- The Council currently transport 144 post 16 SEND students to a number of specialist FE establishments for which no contribution is applied.
- These students will travel to their FE establishment in either a shared vehicle with other SEND pupils, or a bespoke vehicle as a result of their additional needs or geographical location.
- Before a seat on a vehicle is allocated, if appropriate, the initial offer to parents will be in the form of Independent Travel training, where by the student receives one to one training to give them the confidence and skills to use public transport. This has proven to have much wider benefits to the students and their families than just accessing college transport, through creating independence and establishing life skills.
- The proposal to include SEND post 16 students will ensure a consistent approach across all post 16 Transport and also reflects a practice taken by a number of other councils.

Nursery SEND Pupils

- The Council currently transports 17 Nursery aged students, who all attend Severndale Nursery for which no contribution is applied.
- Nursery pupils who attend Severndale special school receive free transport if it is deemed appropriate because of their additional needs.
- These pupils are located county wide, which represents a logistical challenge in order to keep costs to a minimum.
- Before a vehicle is allocated for a pupil, parents are offered travelling expenses at a pre-agreed daily mileage.

Shropshire Council will now commence a period of consultation on its recommendations for those pupils and students (SEND Nursery & Post 16). We would be grateful for any thoughts and comments you may have on these proposals, as described below, which if adopted would commence from September 2019

Proposals

Nursery Age (Under 5's)

To withdraw providing transport for nursery/pre-school aged students from September 2019 for new applications. The implementation of this proposal would ensure there is no impact on existing pupils.

Post 16 (16-19 years old)

1. To increase the lower rate contribution to 50% of the cost of the mainstream scheme from £142.50 to £437.50, maintaining the upper limit of the scheme at its current £875 pa.
2. To expand the contributions scheme to include SEND post 16 students, in line with the mainstream scheme. With the proposed lower rate contribution of £437.50 and the upper limit contribution of £875 pa.

The contribution itself can be paid termly or annually.

The implementation of this proposal would ensure there is no impact on existing pupils.

Consultation

If you have any comments or views on these proposed arrangements from September 2019, please use one of the following methods of communication to put forward your views.

We would also request that schools/colleges pass this information on to any potential new Nursery children or Post 16 students that are due to start in September 2019 as the proposals may affect these students.

✉ Transport Consultation,
Passenger Transport Commissioning Group
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📧 special.transport.team@shropshire.gov.uk

The consultation is also available to view at www.shropshire.gov.uk

The consultation will close on 26th April 2019.

For full details of what the Council currently provides please go to www.shropshire.gov.uk/education-travel-assistance-sen-pupils/

Following this consultation, a decision will then be made, and the Council's policy will be published no later than 31st May 2019.

Yours sincerely

Passenger Transport Commissioning Group
Shropshire Council