

Consultation on proposals to change the Education Travel Assistance Policy: for children of statutory school age and post 16 learners with SEN and/or disabilities

The consultation started on Monday 21st November 2016 and finishes on Tuesday 31st January 2017.

Why are changes proposed?

Local Authorities have some statutory responsibilities to assist children and young people with SEN (Special Educational Needs) and/or disability to attend school or college. The law makes it clear that if a pupil attends a school that is the nearest suitable school to their home and the school is more than 2 miles away (children under 8) or more than 3 miles away for children over 8 travel assistance must be provided. However, Coventry currently provides travel assistance for some pupils who live much closer to school than this.

As a consequence:

- Some children and young people are not given the opportunity to develop the independent travel skills that they need in adulthood; and
- The Council is spending significantly more money on travel assistance than necessary, therefore diverting funds from other important services.

SEN and Disability: The law places additional requirements to offer travel assistance to pupils with significant SEN and disability irrespective of the distance from home to school.

What will not change?

Your child will continue to be entitled to travel assistance if their school is the nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles away (children under 8) or more than 3 miles away for children over 8 years of age.

Your child is highly likely to **continue to be entitled to travel assistance** if they have:

- Profound and multiple learning difficulties;
- Complex communication disorder that has a severe impact on cognition;
- Severe social, emotional and mental health difficulties requiring supervision to secure personal safety,
- Severe learning disability;
- Sensory impaired (registered blind or profoundly deaf)
- Physical disability that significantly impedes mobility e.g. wheelchair users.

What is proposed to change?

Statutory school age

It is proposed that applications for statutory school age travel assistance will be assessed on the following criteria in this order:

1. Distance from their nearest suitable school taking into account any 'unsafe' route;
2. SEN and disability*;
3. Exceptional circumstances;

*Please note your child may not satisfy the SEN criteria if they do not have a mobility difficulty and their assessed need is:

- Moderate learning difficulties
- Speech and language difficulties
- Moderate social communication difficulties
- Moderate hearing loss
- Moderate visual impairment
- Moderate social emotional mental health difficulties

Your child will continue to be entitled to travel assistance if their school is the nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles away (children under 8) or more than 3 miles away for children over 8 years of age. This will be the case even if they do not satisfy the SEN criteria.

The proposed policy sets out in order the different types of travel assistance that will be offered. There is a proposed change to personal travel assistance budgets that equalises payments to all parents/carers at a rate of 45p per mile within City and 25p per mile outside of City.

Post-16

It is proposed that any student granted travel assistance to enable them to access an appropriate Further Education course will make a financial contribution to the cost of £600 per year, which can be paid in half-termly instalments of £100. The proposed contribution is based on West Midlands Local Authorities average charge. It is proposed that for families on low income (defined as receiving highest level working tax credit – Appendix A in the draft policy) the charge will be halved to £300 per academic year.

If you are currently receiving travel assistance it is proposed that these changes will take affect from 1st September 2017. Any new applicants would be assessed under the new policy from 1 April 2017.

What would the overall impact on current users with SEN and/or Disability be?

School age

The Council currently provides travel assistance for 711 pupils. It is estimated that 118 pupils may be affected by these changes, although some will be leaving the school system in July 2017.

Post 16

The Council currently provides travel assistance for 120 students. It is estimated that 10 post-16 students may no longer be eligible under the proposed changes, although some of these would have completed their course by July 2017.

How can I get involved?

You can give your feedback on this consultation in the following ways:

- Completing the [on-line](#) survey or completing the paper survey;
- Attending one of the following drop-in sessions. (Note there were also sessions in early December)

Date	Time	Location
Friday 6 th January	10am – 11.30am	Broad Street Meeting Hall. 122 Broad Street, Coventry CV6 5BJ
Tuesday 10 th January	6:30pm-8pm	Council House, Diamond Room 1 and 2, Earl Street, Coventry CV1 5RR
Tuesday 17 th January	10am – 11.30am	Moat House Leisure and Neighbourhood Centre – Ground Floor Studio, Winston Avenue, Coventry CV2 1EA
Wednesday 18 th January	10am – 11.30am	Cheylesmore Community Centre, Computer Room. Poitiers Road, Coventry CV3 5JX

- If you have any questions please email to the following: travelconsult@coventry.gov.uk
- If you would like any of the documents in different formats, please call: 024 7683 1614.
- A copy of the findings from the consultation will be available on the Coventry City Council website at: www.coventry.gov.uk/travelconsult.
- A final decision is planned to be made at the Coventry City Council Cabinet meeting on 7th March 2017.