



Medway Council

Consultation on proposed changes to the Education Travel Assistance Policy from September 2023

17 April 2023 – 28 May 2023

Introduction

This is Medway Council's consultation on proposed changes to the Education Travel Assistance Policy, to take effect from 1st September 2023. Changes would affect any application for travel assistance received from this date.

The changes proposed will provide a fairer and more progressive Education Transport Assistance Policy, which promotes independence and more sustainable methods of travel. The wording of the policy has also been reviewed for clarity.

At the end of the consultation period, a report outlining the outcomes of the consultation will be prepared and presented to Medway Council's Cabinet in July 2023 for determination. All views and responses received will be incorporated into the report.

Options to be consulted on:

A. Develop and deliver an in-house Travel Training Service in line with current policy

Travel Training presents an opportunity to support young people in gaining skills that promote and develop independence, which can reach beyond their school travel and prepare them for adulthood. A developed sense of independence can also have a positive impact on other areas where the child/young person needs to develop confidence, including engagement in leisure activities.

In preparation for adulthood, the skills gained in navigating school/public transport independently include time management, social skills, managing transactions, coping with busy/public places and personal safety. Similarly, independence and confidence within this area of their lives could support them in accessing further education, employment, and training opportunities.

Empowering young people to travel independently will also deliver budget savings against the cost of providing SEND Transport.

The current Education Travel Assistance Policy includes an allowance to offer Travel Training at point 6.5, and therefore no amendment to the policy is currently required in this regard. However, there is not currently a Travel Training Service which Medway young people can be referred to, after the commissioned service was discontinued.

B. Include the option to provide a suitably trained and vetted independent travel companion to accompany a child on their journey to and from school, where it is evidenced that a parent/carer is unable to do so due to disability

The general expectation is that a child will be accompanied on their journey to and from school as necessary. It is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure appropriate accompaniment, if required.

Medway Council wishes to ensure equality of opportunity for children whose parents/carers have a disability which prevents them from accompanying their child along a walking route and will consider relevant up to date medical information, when assessing an application, as long as it is provided at the time of application and is from a GP, Consultant or other medical practitioner.

The provision of an independent travel companion will mean that the Council can ensure that eligible pupils are accompanied to school where due to a disability, parents/carers are unable to do so. This will encourage sustainable travel to school such as walking and public transport use, which has both independence and environmental benefits.

C. Increase fuel allowance from one return journey from home to school per school day (when an eligible pupil is in the vehicle), to two return journeys for both mainstream and SEND pupils.

Fuel allowances rates of 0.40 per mile for SEN Transport and 0.12 per mile for Mainstream Transport have remained static since at least 2018 and 2008 respectively, and families have had to manage increasing motoring costs. The increased journey allowance may therefore help existing arrangements to remain in place, given the current cost of living.

D. Increase the fuel allowance rate

Fuel allowances rates of 0.40 per mile for SEN Transport and 0.12 per mile for Mainstream Transport have remained static since at least 2018 and 2008 respectively, and families have had to manage increasing motoring costs. Consideration should be given to the amount paid per mile being increased. Medway's rates are currently lower than neighbouring local authorities.

E. Specify that SEN Transport will only be provided at the start and the end of the normal school day. Part-time or individual timetables cannot be supported where it would mean an additional run would be required

Authorities only have a statutory duty to make home to school travel arrangements at the start of the day, and school to home travel arrangements at the end of the day for eligible pupils.

Families have historically been supported with part-time and transition timetables, meaning that additional runs have been commissioned to transport students outside of the standard school day, who usually travel on shared transport, even though this is not statutory or in policy.

Recent driver and vehicle shortages have meant that there have not always been resources available to provide this additional non-statutory service. Clarity on this is therefore required to make clear when an eligible young person will be provided with transport.

F. Reframe available Post 16 Travel Assistance arrangements to prioritise options which promote independent travel and public transport use, and ensure more needs-targeted provision of hired transport

The existing policy will be amended as below to prioritise forms of assistance and promote independent travel and public transport use:

To support young people in gaining important life skills, and promote independent, sustainable travel, young people accessing post-16 education will be offered a travel pass. Where appropriate, they may also be offered travel training and/or support from an independent travel companion for a defined period of time. Fuel allowance is also available to assist families who drive young people to and from school or college.

Subsidised post-16 transport is a discretionary provision, and therefore alternative post-16 transport options will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. For example, where a young person cannot be driven to school or college, and their special educational needs or disability mean that it is not reasonably practicable for them to access their provision by public transport. Supporting evidence from a GP, Consultant or other medical practitioner which illustrates an exceptional need is required to support the application.

Consultation on proposed changes to the Education Travel Assistance Policy from September 2023 – Response form

This consultation will close on 28th May 2023

Please provide your response below:

	I agree	I disagree
Option A		
Option B		
Option C		
Option D		
Option E		
Option F		

I would like to make the following comments about the proposed changes:

Continue on a further sheet if necessary

Signed.....

Designation/Organisation (if applicable)

Please return to:

etapconsultation@medway.gov.uk

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