

Consultation on changes to Home to School transport policy 2023

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OFFICIAL

Children's and Young People's Travel Assistance policy (formerly the Home to School transport policy 2023) Consultation

Introduction

Warwickshire County Council is working to provide children and young people the best service experience they can. As part of the wider consideration of transport services we are looking at proposed changes to the Home to School/College Transport Policy (to be Children's and Young People's Travel Assistance policy).

We need views from as wide a range of people as possible including those who have experience of using the service.

The Council's Vision for All is that: "All our children and young people have the right to lead a fulfilling life and to be part of their community."

An important part of ensuring that we can deliver this vision is to provide effective support to those children and young people who are eligible for travel assistance so that they can travel to and from their educational setting safely.

Currently in Warwickshire, there are approximately 10,000 children and young people accessing travel assistance, including 2000 pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan of compulsory school age and 500 SEND Post 16 pupils.

The Home to School Transport Service is responsible for processing all applications the Council receives for Home to School/College travel assistance. This includes checking eligibility against the published criteria, carrying out risk assessments when required, arranging transport providers, planning transport routes and providing independent travel training.

The current policy is included in the supporting documentation attached to this report.

Please read this document all the way through before sharing your views. We have also provided a range of supporting documents to help you consider.

About this consultation

The Council wishes to gather views on the changes being proposed to the Home to School/College Transport Policy (to be Children's and Young People's Travel Assistance policy). These changes are intended to bring the policy in line with national guidance ([Travel to school for children of compulsory school age, January 2024](#)), clarify the wording on the Home to School/College Transport Policy (to be Children's and Young People's Travel Assistance policy) and ensure Warwickshire County Council is meeting its statutory requirements whilst providing an efficient transport service and considering all financial viable options for non-statutory services.

Like local authorities up and down the country, Warwickshire County Council continues to face extreme financial challenges. The Council is committed to providing more efficient, integrated services whilst ensuring that its statutory duties are met. Financial pressures mean that Warwickshire County Council must review the non-statutory functions it provides and consider whether these arrangements are still financially viable.

It is proposed that all new applicants from September 2026 will be assessed using the new classification system. Existing pupils who access travel assistance who have a change in circumstances requiring a new application (such as a house move) will also be assessed against the new policy from September 2026.

The Council wants to hear your views on the proposed changes to the Home to School/College Transport policy.

Why are we proposing to make changes?

The Government published the new national statutory guidance on Home to School Travel in January 2024, updating its 2014 guidance document. (Department for Education-[Travel to school for children of compulsory school age, January 2024](#)). The updated guidance has been provided to provide better clarity and ease of understanding of the statutory requirements. The language in the new guidance has also been changed to include improved wording around parental responsibility. The guidance makes it very clear that the responsibility for ensuring that a child attends school rests with the parent, not the Council. The Council does have a duty to make home-to-school transport arrangements for eligible pupils, however the responsibility for attendance remains with the parent.

The proposals within this consultation take account of the changes to the national statutory guidance and look to simplify the wording of the Council's policy to make it easier to understand as well as being compliant with the relevant legislation.

Home to School Transport is a key area of Council expenditure and has been rising significantly from £17.9m in 2018/19 to a budget of £47.11m in 2025/26. During this time there has been a consistent rise in numbers applying for transport. The proposed amendments will allow a clearer and tighter approach to the assessment of eligibility as well as bringing Warwickshire's policy in-line with the new national guidelines and will provide more control over the spend of the Home to School Transport budget.

The proposals also reflect a review of other local authorities' best practice and approaches as highlighted in reports such as [County Council network report 2023](#), [Local Government Association 2019 report](#), and [ADCS and ADEPT 2023 report](#).

Warwickshire is seeing an increase in population and the number of children accessing education, leading to an increase in demand for Home to School Transport assistance. There is also a 10% national increase in Education, Health and Care plans. There is a predicted yearly increase of 13% as minimum for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans, as the Home to School transport service currently assists 46% of pupil's compulsory school age with an EHCP in Warwickshire with transport, this further increases demand on the Home to School Transport service.

The policy is being changed for several reasons:

- To update the policy to better reflect the changes that DfE made to its statutory guidance in 2024
- To revise non-statutory duties
- To ensure consistencies in the transport policy
- To make sure the service is working as efficiently as financially possible

The proposed changes will:

- update the policy in line with recent changes in the statutory guidance
- revise non-statutory duties
- ensure consistency across the county
- simplify the application and assessment process
- Ensure the walking routes assessment is in line with national guidance and implemented effectively
- Reflect changes in how to conduct assessments for low-income families, in line with new government guidance surrounding working tax credit, universal credit and free school meals

If approved these proposals would become operational by September 2026 and be effective for all pupils in the September 2027 intake.

What are we consulting about?

We are proposing changing the way Home to School Transport is provided for children and young people in Warwickshire and would welcome views from stakeholders and the wider public on the following proposals:

The areas we are looking to change are:

- Policy structure and clarification- for easier reading and information.
- Eligibility - SEND nursery age
- Eligibility - Compulsory School age - adjusted
 - School spaces and parental preference
 - Extenuating Circumstances
 - Extended Rights - information adjusted to fit with new government processes and guidance regarding Free School Meals
- Eligibility - Post 16 - Eligibility criteria adjusted
- Walking Route assessments
- Travel assistance - Assistance provided
- Parental Information

The tables below outline the proposed changes within each area.

The table below applies to all pupils (including SEND and pupils with an EHCP) 0-19 years and pupils 19-25 years with SEND and pupils with an EHCP).

Section	Policy Area	Proposed changes
Policy structure and clarification	Whole policy for easier reading and information.	Removal of Paid Vacant seat information in policy. The Paid Vacant Seat Service will still be available, and further information will be found on the Home to School Transport webpage
		Removal of timeframe in policy. Further guidance will be provided on website
		Use of the term “Travel Assistance” instead of “Transport”
Eligibility	SEND nursery age	Removal: Non-statutory service
	Compulsory School age-Nearest Qualifying School	Addition: School spaces for the purpose of assessing transport entitlement, will be considered at time of admissions school offer to the pupil and not at time of transport assessment, as done currently.
		Addition: The amended policy would make clear that there will be no entitlement to home-to-school transport assistance if a place would have been available at a school nearer the child's home address, had it been listed as a priority, or higher priority, in the application process.
		Removal: The entitlement to transport to Priority Schools (also known as catchment schools) as eligibility in future will be based on whether the pupil is attending their nearest suitable setting with spaces available.

	Compulsory School age- Extenuating Circumstances	Removal: Respite assistance for EHCP pupils. This is a non-statutory service
		Removal: Managed Move assistance. This is a non-statutory service; it would be for schools to agree any assistance between themselves.
		Guidance would be provided on Alternative Provisions and Offsite Directions to clarify that transport is not the Council's responsibility.
		Guidance would clarify transport provision availability for those unable to attend school as a consequence of illness, exclusion or otherwise excluded/suspended pupils
	Compulsory School age- Extended Rights	Adjusted: Clarification on extended rights for children in receipt of free school meals and families receiving other qualifying benefits.
	Post 16	Addition: Requirement that families will have applied for other sources of assistance before applying for transport. This aligns with DFE guidance
		Addition: Hours of study defined in order to align with DFE guidance
		Addition: All Post 16 pupils must be attending a full-time course AND EITHER: the distance from the home address to the educational setting must be 3.00 miles or more, OR, if the distance is below 3.00 miles, travelling time via public transportation must exceed 75 minutes (one way). Circumstances outside of this will be considered on an individual basis
		Addition: Clear expectation would be provided of the use of "Motability" vehicle or payments to facilitate attendance
Assessment of safe walking routes	Streetlighting	Currently written in to policy but not previously implemented in practice: Lack of streetlighting will not be considered as automatically rendering a route unsafe when assessing the availability of walking routes.
	Review of Routes	Adjustment: Unsafe routes would be reviewed every 6 months, which is now practical due to new software.

	Pathways/footpaths/ footways	Currently written in to policy but not previously implemented in practice: Pathways/ footpaths and footways will be considered as per national guidance.
Travel assistance	Alternative Assistance	Transport that is not a bus pass or Travel Payment will be classed as Alternative Assistance- reduced descriptions in policy as it is not a statutory requirement to describe precisely what transport will be provided.
	Independent Travel Training- Pre 16 EHCP pupils	Adjustment: When a pupil in Year 9 to Year 11 and has an Education, Health and Care Plan, and a bus pass or Travel Payment is refused or not appropriate, independent travel training ("ITT") will be encouraged when possible.
	Independent Travel Training- Post 16 EHCP pupils	Addition: Those eligible for SEND Post 16 travel will be offered a bus pass or Travel Payment. Should parents consider that this would not be suitable then the pupil will be considered for ITT.
Parental Information	Exam arrangements	Clarification: Travel assistance will not be adjusted for alternative settings and pick up times.
	Parental Mobility Problems	If a pupil is attending their nearest qualifying school and the safe walking distance is under the statutory walking distance, however their parent's mobility needs mean that they are unable to accompany the pupil or facilitate transport to their education setting. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Council.
	Pick up and Drop offs	Adjustment: Drop off and pick up points will be encouraged, and it will be parent's responsibility to ensure pupils reach the required stop.

Your views

Responses to this consultation will help to inform the future assessment process and policy in which pupils are assessed against, for Home to School Travel Assistance for children and young people within Warwickshire.

We would like to hear all views on these proposals. We are also seeking views on any suggestions you may have to improve our proposals.

Please note that an Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and is available for you to review. We would like to know whether you think the proposals will create any equalities or other impacts, and if so, what these might be and how you think they will affect you or other people. We would also like you to tell us if you have any ideas on how we could overcome or reduce these impacts. The Equalities Impact Assessment will be updated after the consultation taking account of the feedback we receive.

The consultation will run from 4th November 2025 to 22nd December 2025.

Supporting Information

To help you to consider the proposals and respond to this consultation we have provided the following supporting information:

- Public Information Document
- Current policy information
 - Home to School/College Transport Policy 2022 (Current Policy)
 - Post 16 Statement (current).
- Proposed policy Information:
 - New Children's and Young People's Travel Assistance Policy
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Equality Impact Assessment

You may also find it helpful to refer to the following:

- Department for Education (DfE) - [SEND Code of Practice 2015](#)
- Department for Education (DfE) [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age, 2023](#).
- Department for Education (DfE) [Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training 2019](#)
- [Warwickshire Education Sufficiency Strategy 2024 - 2029](#)

How can you take part in the consultation?

You can tell us what you think in several ways.

- The main way to feedback is an online questionnaire that can be accessed from Warwickshire County Council's online consultation hub www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask.
- If you require a paper copy of the questionnaire or an alternative format, please contact us by phone or email (see below for contact details).
- If you need Easy Read information, please email hometoschooltransport@warwickshire.gov.uk.
- If you would like to respond to this consultation in writing you can do this by emailing hometoschooltransport@warwickshire.gov.uk or sending your written response to Transport Delivery (consultation) Shire Hall, Warwick, CV34 4SP.

Schools and other educational settings will be consulted through informal and formal meetings and events.

Public information events

We are also holding a series of information sessions both virtually and in person across Warwickshire. Places are limited so please use the link or QR code below to book on. Once submitting the form, you will receive the full information of the session via email (please spam/junk folders). Spaces will be allocated on a first come, first serve basis, but if your chosen session is fully booked, you will have an opportunity to join a waiting list.

Link to form: [Home to School Consultation Sessions](#)

QR code:



Contact Details

For further information on this consultation please email: Hometoschooltransport@warwickshire.gov.uk.

What will happen after the consultation?

Following the consultation all feedback will be analysed and will inform the final proposals about changes to Home to School Travel Assistance Policy which will be taken to Cabinet where a final decision will be made in Summer 2026.

If approved, the proposals will be implemented in the September 2026.