



Somerset Council
Scrutiny Committee – Children & Families

Post 16 Local Transport Policy Statement - 2025/26

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Executive Lead Member: Cllr Heather Shearer – Lead Member for Children, Families and Education / Cllr Richard Wilkins – Lead Member for Transport and Waste Division / Local Member: All

1. Summary

- 1.1.** Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) have a statutory duty to review their Post 16 Local Transport Policy Statement on an annual basis, setting out the arrangements for enabling eligible Post-16 learners (aged 16-18) and Post 19 (aged 19+), to access Further Education.
- 1.2.** Somerset Council is proposing to make significant changes to the Post 16 Policy for the 2025/26 academic year and as such is required to undertake a statutory consultation process.
- 1.3.** LTAs are required to publish an updated Policy Statement for the 2025/26 academic year by 31st May 2025. This Policy will be subject to an Executive Decision on 12th May 2025.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. That Scrutiny considers the proposed changes to the Post 16 Travel Policy 2025/26 (Draft copy attached at Appendix A)**

3. Background

- 3.1.** Whilst Somerset Council is statutorily obliged to make free of charge home to school travel arrangements for eligible children of compulsory school age, there is no similar statutory obligation on the Local Authority for Post 16 learners. However, Somerset Council still provides substantial discretionary assistance for Post 16 learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at a significant financial cost.
- 3.2.** For the 2025/26 academic year, Somerset Council are proposing to introduce measures which will reduce the offer of support available to Post 16 learners with SEND, in-line with legislation, but will promote independence and support young

people in their transition to adulthood.

3.3. The following measures are proposed:

- A new stepped model of assistance for eligible Post 16 and Post 19 learners with SEND that will, wherever appropriate, prioritise an offer of Independent Travel Training (ITT), enabling young people to develop the skills needed to access the public transport network and travel independently.
- Where ITT is assessed to be inappropriate for a young person, a Personal Travel Payment (PTP) will be provided as a contribution towards the cost of the learners' travel arrangements. The payment will take into account individual circumstances and support families, in part to make their own travel arrangements.
- Where there are seats available on a contracted vehicle carrying school-age children to an education provision, these may be offered as an alternative to a PTP.

3.4. Travel assistance for Post-16 and Post-19 learners with SEND, will still require an application and will be assessed to determine eligibility and the appropriate type of assistance offered.

3.5. Any changes approved by the Executive Committee, will apply to the 2025/26 Post 16 Travel Policy and will be implemented for young people entering Post 16 education in September 2025 and onwards.

3.6. All young people already in Post-16 education prior to September 2025, will continue on the current policy, except in a small number of cases where reassessment is required due to a change in circumstances, such as:

- a change in their medical needs
- a house move
- a change of education setting
- or at certain key transition points in their learning where a new application for travel assistance is required

3.7. The Policy will remain unchanged for those students who do not have SEND. Where learners need to travel to Further Education by public transport, they can still purchase one of the tickets options offered by the public transport operators. On bus services where the Council controls the fare the student day return ticket will increase from £5 to £5.40.

3.8. For those students attending Post 16 at a Local Authority Sixth Form School or Academy, there will still be the option of applying for a paid seat on the contracted school bus where there is space available, within the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR).

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. A public consultation was launched 10th February 2025, through the Council's Citizen Space portal, inviting views on the proposed changes. The consultation closes 30th March 2025. The Council's Communications Team have supported

with the promotion of the consultation, which includes a press release, social media content, newsletters to schools, updates to Independent Education Providers and an interview with the Lead Member for Children, Families and Education on BBC Radio Somerset.

- 4.2. At the point of publishing the Scrutiny report a total of 42 consultation responses had been received which included 24 comments within the open text box.

Responses can be summarised as follows:

- 22% strongly agreeing with the proposals
- 20% agreeing with the proposals
- 26% disagreeing with the proposals; and
- 21% strongly disagreeing

- 4.3. A high majority of the comments received are positive and include:

“Promotion of independence is a fantastic proposal that will massively support the futures of young people with SEND and actively assist the LA with reducing costs/spend on non-statutory services”

“I agree that pupils with SEND should be encouraged to be as independent as they are able to be. There will be exceptions so as long as the policy is able to consider these I fully agree”

- 4.4. In contrast, negative comments received include:

“As a result of legislation introduced in September 2013, the law now requires that young people continue in education, employment or training until the age of 18. This is not optional. If the young person is living in a rural area there are limited transport options available and transport costs are huge. This means in order to get to any education, employment or training there is a significant financial implication”

- 4.5. The Parent Carer Forum were consulted on the proposed changes and have been involved during this process with communication for parents and questions or queries.

5. Financial and risk implications

- 5.1. In-line with the decision taken at budget setting by Full Council, in relation to fees and charges, there will be an increase in the student day return ticket on services where the Council controls the fares from £5 to £5.40.

- 5.2. The annual travel assistance contribution (where applicable) for eligible Further Educational Need and Disabilities (FE SEND) students will increase in-line with CPI. The current contribution for 2024/25 is £971.

- 5.3. The introduction of a new stepped model of assistance for eligible pupils will see a distinct move towards offering Independent Travel Training or Personal Travel Payments in the first instance, where this is the most appropriate option. This will reduce the dependence on individual contracted services and provide more cost-effective solutions, which will reduce the pressure on the FE SEND transport budget.

- 5.4. There is a risk that where a Personal Travel Payment is issued, it is not used for

the purpose it was intended, and the young person does not attend College. Payments are made on a monthly basis, and attendance is monitored to ensure the young person is attending their FE course. Any concerns will be investigated and the PTP can be withdrawn if misuse is identified.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1.** Section 509AA of the Education Act 1996 requires the Council to prepare and publish a transport policy statement annually specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other arrangements that the Authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of learners of sixth form age receiving education. It is also good practice for local authorities to include information about what transport arrangements are available and whether they are adequate to enable young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25 to participate in education and training.
- 6.2.** As the decision to implement the transport policy statement is an exercise of the authority's functions, the authority must, when taking the decision, comply with the public sector equality duty in s149 of the Equality Act 2010, in particular by having due regard to the equality matters listed in that section, including the need to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3.** The Local Authorities legal team were consulted regarding the proposed changes for 2025/26. They advised that changes to the Policy could be made providing the correct consultation procedure is completed and Sections 75-80 of the guidance adhered to.

7. HR Implications

- 7.1.** There are no HR implications associated with this decision. Independent Travel Trainers are already employed to support young people with independent travel and an Officer is in post to manage Personal Travel Payments.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1.** The Equalities implications have been considered and are set out in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) attached at Appendix B.

9. Background papers

- 9.1.**
 - 2024/25 Post 16 Local Policy Statement
 - Department for Education Statutory Guidance - [Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training](#)

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author