

DECISION-MAKER:	Cabinet
SUBJECT:	School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age 2025-2026 and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training 2025-2026
DATE OF DECISION:	28 th January 2025
REPORT OF:	Councillor Winning, Cabinet Member for Children & Learning

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	
N/A	
BRIEF SUMMARY	
<p>The council’s School Travel Service Policy and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement sets out the council’s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to the operation of the School Travel Service in Southampton; and • Statutory requirements along with local policy, including the criteria for eligibility, the type of travel support the council may provide and how to appeal a decision. <p>The School Travel Service provides travel support to children, young people and adult learners to support their access to education. As of December 2024, the service is providing travel support to ~1,500 (~850 vehicle transport, ~550 bus passes and ~90 Personal Travel Budget) clients to and from their education setting.</p> <p>A review of the council’s School Travel Service and Post-16 Travel Service Policy 2024-2025 has taken place and following 45-day public consultation on proposed changes, which closed on 28th October 2024 and received 96 responses, the draft policies have been updated for Cabinet approval on 28th January 2025.</p>	
RECOMMENDATIONS:	
(i)	To approve the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age 2025-2026 (Appendix 1) and the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training 2025-2026 (Appendix 2).

	(ii)	To delegate authority to the Executive Director for Community Wellbeing, Children and Learning, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning to make minor changes to the policies during their period of effect.
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REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	Local authorities must make free-of-charge travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance at school of eligible children of compulsory school age that are resident in their area. Local authorities must publish their school travel policy for children of compulsory school age by 19 th September each year.
2.	Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of travel support to facilitate the attendance to young people of sixth form age and young people with EHC Plans up to age 25 where they are continuing on a course started before their 19th birthday in education or training. Local authorities must publish this policy statement by 31 st May each year.
3.	Local authorities have a duty to make arrangements for the provision of travel support as they consider necessary in respect of: (a) adults (aged over 19 years and under the age of 25 years) for the purpose of facilitating their attendance in education; and, (b) relevant young adults with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for the purpose of facilitating their attendance at institutions where they are receiving education or training outside the further and higher education sectors. The adult duty applies only to young people who are attending a course which they started after their 19th birthday, including those with EHC Plans. Where the local authority makes such arrangements, any transport provided must be free of charge. Local authorities must publish this policy statement by 31 st May each year.
4.	As part of the annual review of the School Travel Policy, some minor changes and some material changes that affect the service provision have been proposed and consulted upon through a formal public consultation. Approval is required by Cabinet so that the School Travel Policy can be published for 2025-2026 academic year.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5.	Not applicable, Southampton City Council is required to have a School Travel Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and a Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training by law.
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DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

6.	<u>Proposed changes to the policy</u>
6.1.	<p>The School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age 2025-2026 (Appendix 1) and the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training will update the current School Travel Service and Post-16 Travel Service Policy 2024-2025.</p> <p>For the 2025-2026 policies, the following changes were proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update wording and terminology to improve clarity. • Separate the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young

	<p>People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training from the School Travel Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age to make two separate documents to align with national statutory guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Personal Travel Budget. • Add a post-16 travel grant option, and a contribution charge where vehicle transport is provided. • Add that the maximum travel support provision is for attendance of 18 hours over three days for eligible post-16 students. • Evidence requirement for post-19 travel support (that other options for travel support / funding have been explored). • Removal of travel support eligibility post-house move where parents and Carers want their children to remain at the same school. • Reduction in the notice period given if travel support is awarded in error. • Removal of privilege places. • Increase the number of suitable schools that families must list on mainstream application forms if they wish to apply for travel support. <p>In addition, other proposed changes as a result of consultation feedback include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where transport is provided, due to the GCSE results being issued in August followed by enrolment planning, vehicle transport will be available from October to allow time to put the transport routes in place. Parents and Carers will need to make their own arrangements in September with mileage claimable. • Include information in the School Travel Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age about decelerated children and their entitlement to travel support to year 11.
7.	<u>Public Engagement Exercise</u>
7.1	A public consultation took place between 09 September 2024 through to 28th October 2024.
7.2	<p>The aim of the consultation was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate the proposed draft policies to service users and stakeholders; • Ensure any resident, business or stakeholder in Southampton that wished to comment on the proposals had the opportunity to do so, enabling them to raise any impacts the proposals may have, and • Allow participants to propose alternative suggestions for consideration which they feel could achieve the objectives of the policy in a different way.
7.3	A standard online survey was used for the consultation questionnaire which gave a brief outline of each priority along with a reference to the section in the draft policy.
7.4	An Easy Read format questionnaire was also used to present the draft proposals in a clear and understandable way for consultees with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

7.5	An ESIA (Members Room Document 1) was published with the consultation.		
7.6	In total, 96 responses were received. The breakdown is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 79 responses to the standard online survey. • 10 email responses. • 7 responses to the easy read questionnaire. 		
7.7	The consultation was promoted in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via letter and email to schools, colleges, parents and carers. • Face-to-face and virtual (MS Teams) events with key stakeholders; eight events for clients (children, young people and adult learners) and parents and carers held at public venues, at the Civic Centre and at two special schools and supported by the Southampton Parent Carer Forum, and four events for schools and colleges. • Advertisement on the School Travel Service webpage. • Southampton City Council and SEND team social media and e-bulletins, including schools (primary and secondary). • Family hubs – directly to parents and carers by the Southampton City Council and SEND team. • Press release on the day of launch (09 September 2024) and on Southampton City Council website ‘Have Your Say’ pages. • Advertisement through the Local Offer. • Directly to 134 travel suppliers (transport operators) via the Proactis portal (used for communications to suppliers). • Article in the Daily Echo on 12th September 2024. 		
8.	<u>The Consultation proposals, responses and action</u>		
8.1	A Consultation Report (Members Room Document 2) includes a full breakdown of the consultation results.		
8.2	A summary of the consultation responses is provided in sections 8.3-8.5 below.		
8.3	Proposals	Responses	SCC Action
	Update wording and terminology to improve clarity for the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.	Overall, 57% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 44% felt it would have a positive impact.	Propose to proceed with draft changes.

<p>Separate the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age from the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training to make two separate documents to align with national statutory guidance.</p>	<p>68% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 49% felt it would have a positive impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with separating into two documents.</p>
<p>An updated Personal Travel Budget offer in the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training</p>	<p>59% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 53% felt it would have a positive impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with this proposal and also make amendments to reflect consultation feedback to improve the offer.</p> <p>Text in section 3.17 of the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and section 2.27 of the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training has been updated.</p>
<p>Add post-16 travel grant option, and a contribution charge where vehicle transport is provided for Post-16 students to the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training, and a contribution charge where vehicle transport is provided for discretionary travel</p>	<p>54% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 58% felt it would have a negative impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with the proposal but revise policy wording due to the various concerns from the respondents to make the options clearer, and add 'Pension Credit' for means testing.</p> <p>Section 2.5 School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School</p>

	<p>support for under 16 years, to the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age.</p>		<p>Age has been updated.</p> <p>Sections 2.17 and 2.30-2.32 in the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training have been updated.</p>
	<p>Add that the maximum travel support provision is for attendance of 18 hours over three days for eligible post-16 students to the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.</p>	<p>46% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 47% felt it would have a negative impact.</p>	<p>Propose to revise wording to state that this is the statutory duty, and propose to add wording that the council will work with post-16 education settings to offer 18 hours over three days where possible but that travel support will still be provided where education settings cannot meet this</p> <p>Section 1.13 of the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training has been updated.</p>
	<p>Evidence requirement for post-19 travel support (that other options for travel support / funding have been explored) in the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.</p>	<p>48% of respondents agreed with the proposal but 39% felt it would have a negative impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with the proposal but revise policy wording to make it clear that travel support will still be provided to eligible young adults who have evidenced that they have explored alternative options before applying for travel support</p> <p>Section 1.23 of the Post-16 Travel Service Policy</p>

			<p>Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training has been updated.</p> <p>Propose to add information about where adults can find information for 25+ adult learning and support.</p> <p>Section 2.59 added to the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.</p>
	<p>Removal of travel support eligibility post-house move where the parent or carer wishes for the child to remain at the same school (if it is no longer the nearest suitable school) from the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.</p>	<p>45% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 49% felt it would have a negative impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with the proposal but revise policy wording to make it clear that it is with regard to distance based travel support and is unlikely to apply to children of compulsory school age with an EHCP where travel support has been awarded on an exceptional basis.</p> <p>Section 3.28 of the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age has been updated.</p>
	<p>Reduction in the notice period given if travel support is awarded in error in the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young</p>	<p>48% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 46% felt it would have a negative impact.</p>	<p>Propose to proceed with the proposal. The council should minimise the length of time it continues to misappropriate council funds where a child, young person or young adult is not</p>

	People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.		eligible for travel support.
	Removal of privilege places in the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.	58% of respondents agreed with the proposal and 28% felt it would have a positive impact.	Propose to proceed with the proposal.
	Increase the number of suitable schools families must list on mainstream application forms if they wish to apply for travel support in the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age.	49% of respondents agreed with the proposal but equal responses, 36%, felt it would have a positive and negative impact.	Propose to proceed with the proposal but revise policy wording to make it clear that the proposal is only relevant where a child or young person does not have an EHCP and attends a mainstream school. Section 3.25 of the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age has been updated.
8.4	<p>Additionally, in response to the consultation comment regarding where vehicle transport is provided but due to the GCSE results being issued in August followed by enrolment planning there is not enough time for the School Travel Service to make the travel arrangements for the start of September, it is proposed to update the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training to offer vehicle transport from the start of October to allow time to put the transport routes in place. Parents and Carers will need to make their own arrangements in September with mileage claimable until routes are in place.</p> <p>Sections 2.35 and 2.36 added to the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training.</p>		
8.5	<p>Additionally, in response to the consultation comment to include information in the School Travel Policy for children of compulsory school about decelerated children and their entitlement to year 11, it is proposed to</p>		

	<p>update the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age.</p> <p>Section 2.14 added to the School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age.</p>
8.6.	The draft Policies that were published for the consultation (v0.10) have been refined to v0.13 in response to the feedback received from public consultation (Appendices 1 and 2).
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
9.	<u>Capital/Revenue</u>
9.1.	There will be no impact on Capital income / expenditure.
9.2	The proposed updates to the Policies are part of the School Travel Service Transformation Programme, therefore any cost mitigation / income as a result of the updated policies are part of the transformation plan to reduce the School Travel Service budget requirement.
9.3	The service is confident that the tightening of the policy with the proposed changes will generate financial benefits to the Council. As quantification of the financial benefits remains uncertain, the impact of the policy changes will be monitored as part of the assessment of the transformation of the School Travel Service.
9.4	The updated Personal Travel Budget will reduce the cost of travel support provision where the cost of vehicle transport is more than the Personal Travel Budget agreed with the client. Personal Travel Budgets are only offered where there is not a suitable alternative travel support option or in exceptional cases and/or it is a more economically viable option to the council. The additional travel budget criteria will be determined to support the negotiation
9.5	The inclusion of a Post-16 travel grant option to the hierarchy for Post-16 travel support provision should provide revenue cost efficiencies in the provision of travel support where it is more cost-effective to offer a travel grant verses the cost of a vehicle transport. The offer of vehicle travel support will be in exceptional circumstances.
9.6	A means tested contribution charge towards the cost of vehicle transport where offered will provide an income to the service.
9.7	Where clients will need to evidence the requirement for Post-16 travel support there may be a cost revenue efficiency if a client can use another form of travel funding to support their travel to and from their education setting.
9.8	Removal of travel support eligibility post-house move (for children without an EHCP) where they want to remain at the same school (if it is no longer the nearest suitable school) may provide a minor cost revenue efficiency where a client is will no longer entitled to travel support following a house-move that would ordinarily mean they could apply for travel support.
9.9	Reducing the notice period where travel support is awarded in error may provide a cost revenue efficiency where the council will not have to continue to pay for mistakes by continuing with travel provision for up to two school terms.

9.10	Removal of privilege places will not have an effect on current revenue as there are no clients with a privilege place. It will mean that in the future, there will be no costs as a result of a privilege place where the income is far less than the charge for a place on a vehicle.
9.11	Where parents or carers will need to list their nearest three schools on their application form if they intend to apply for travel support, the council may not be required to provide school travel support where the child may have been awarded a place at a school which would not qualify for travel support under the distance criteria if they had listed three school places, which may lead to a revenue cost efficiency.
9.12	If the Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement for Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training is updated to provide vehicle travel support from the start of October each year and offer a mileage reimbursement each year for September or until travel support is in place (which may be sooner than the start of October), this will likely offer a revenue cost-efficiency where a mileage reimbursement will be less than the cost of vehicle travel provision.
10	<u>Property/Other</u>
10.1	None
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
11.	<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report</u>
11.1	Under section 508A of the Education Act, local authorities must promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and make transport arrangements for all eligible children.
11.2	Local authorities have discretionary power under section 508C of the Education Act 1996 to make travel arrangements for other children.
11.3	Local authorities have a duty under sections 508F and 508G of the Education Act 1996, as inserted by section 57 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. Under section 508F, the local authority is required to make such arrangements for the provision of transport as they consider necessary in respect of: (a) adults (i.e. those who are aged 19 or over) for the purpose of facilitating their attendance at local authority maintained or assisted further or higher education institutions or institutions within the further education sector; and (b) relevant young adults with an EHC plan (which can only be maintained up until the age of 25) for the purpose of facilitating their attendance at institutions where they are receiving education or training outside the further and higher education sectors. For those young adults, the local authority's duty only applies where the local authority has secured the provision of education or training at that institution and the provision of boarding accommodation in connection with that education or training. The adult duty applies only to young people who are attending a course which they started after their 19th birthday, including those with EHC plans.
11.4	Local authorities have a duty under the School Information (England) Regulations 2008 to publish information about travel arrangements.
12.	<u>Other Legal Implications:</u>

12.1.	The council may be legally challenged where a travel grant for Post-16 travel support may not be sufficient to enable a young person to access their education setting.
12.2	The council may be legally challenged where provision of a mileage allowance for Post-16 travel support up to the start of October in place of vehicle travel support may not be sufficient to enable a young person to access their education setting.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
13.	Failure to have policies in place for travel support for children of compulsory school age and post-16 young people and young adults to support education and training would be high risk and leave the council exposed to legal challenge for non-compliance with its statutory duty to have a policy in place, under section 508 of the Education Act and the School Information (England) Regulations 2008.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
14.	In developing the policies, a review has been conducted to ensure it is in accordance with relevant Policy Framework policies and strategies. The policy is consistent with the council's corporate objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025.

KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	School Travel Service Policy for Children of Compulsory School Age 2025-2026
2.	Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement For Young People and Young Adults to Support Education and Training 2025-2026
Documents In Members' Rooms	
1.	ESIA School Travel Service Policy and Post-16 Travel Service Policy Statement 2025-2026
2.	School Travel Policy Consultation 2024 Report
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No
Other Background Documents	
Other Background documents available for inspection at:	

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.	