



Consultation Evaluation Report

Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement Review

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Contents

1.	Purpose of this report	3
2.	Executive summary	3
3.	Background	4
4.	Consultation objectives	4
5.	Consultation process	5
6.	Stakeholders	5
7.	Methodology	6
8.	Communications	8
9.	Public engagement	13
10.	Summary of consultation responses	14
11.	Conclusions	26
12.	Appendices	27

1. Purpose of this report

This report will:

- a. Provide an overview of the consultation process for the Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement Review
- b. Outline response numbers, types and key themes
- c. Be appended to a Cabinet report about the Review to aid the Council in its decision-making process regarding the proposed changes to the revised Home to School Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement.

2. Executive summary

This summary highlights the key themes generated by the consultation regarding the Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement review.

A total of 74 responses were received, containing just over 200 free text comments.

One organisational response and three additional emails were received.

The key themes expressed in the consultation responses are:

The proposed Home to School Transport Policy and proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement are felt to be partly or fully clear and easy to understand. Overall, the majority of respondents expressed that view.

Some sections of the proposed Policy and Statement are still not sufficiently clear. Within the free text comments respondents have highlighted some of these areas. The Council will review those highlighted areas carefully to understand where further improvements and clarifications can be made.

Appetite has been shown by parents and carers towards wanting to have more choice and freedom to organise their own transport for their children. Although 28% of overall respondents said they were unsure, 42% of overall respondents said they would like to have more freedom and choice to organise their own transport arrangements.

In relation to Post-16 SEND transport options, a clear view has been expressed for Option 2 – Choice of an annual fee or Personal Transport Budget. This view was expressed by respondents overall and across all specific respondent groups.

3. Background

Buckinghamshire's Home to School Transport Policy sets out the Council's approach to providing transport to schools and a range of other educational settings for 0 – 19 year olds (and up to 25 years for those with special educational needs and disabilities). The Policy aims to ensure that pupils arrive at their education setting ready to learn.

The Council has a duty to prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. This statement specifies the arrangements for transport that the Council considers it necessary to make in order to facilitate the attendance of sixth form students receiving education or training. The Statement is published in line with the statutory duties under the Education Act 1996, including s.509AA and s.509AB and takes into account the Department for Education statutory guidance – Post-16 transport to education and training - January 2019.

The Buckinghamshire Post-16 Transport Policy Statement provides information on travel and transport arrangements that are available to young people who are above statutory school age (which ends on the last Friday in June in the academic year in which they turn 16). The statement applies to any young person aged 16-19 (16-25 if they have SEND) who lives in Buckinghamshire.

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement is reviewed annually; the most recent consultation regarding this was held in July 2020.

The current Transport Policy Statement applies a charge to 16–18 year old students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities who receive transport; however charges have been paused for the academic year 2020/21 due to the impact of Coronavirus. This is an exceptional decision. Charges as described in the current policy are set to resume for the academic year 2021/22.

4. Consultation objectives

The Council made the decision to carry out a review of the Policy and the associated Post-16 Transport Policy Statement to ensure that the Policy is continually improved and to seek the views of all key stakeholders about the proposed Policy changes.

The Council is committed to:

- Supporting children and young people to have access to educational opportunities at school or other educational settings, helping them to achieve their potential and effectively transition to adulthood.
- Providing clear and transparent information and guidance to pupils and families so that they make informed choices about transport provision.
- Working in partnership with stakeholders and ensuring that meaningful engagement is a key part of the consultation.

The consultation opened on 12 October 2020, ran for 8 weeks, and closed at midnight on 7 December 2020.

5. Consultation process

A project team, led by an Education Project Manager, was convened to coordinate the consultation process. The team included the Council's Consultation and Engagement Lead and a Communications Officer, as well as representatives from Transport Services, Admissions and Finance. The team sought regular input and liaison with the Head of Transformation and Improvement (Education), Legal Services, Service Director (Education) and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

The project had five distinct stages:

1. Objectives-setting
2. Planning and research to inform the consultation approach
3. Pre-engagement phase
4. Public consultation period
5. Consultation close, evaluation of responses and development of outcome reports and revised Policy

The Council's corporate consultation process was followed.

6. Stakeholders

A range of key stakeholders were identified as part of the consultation preparation phase. These were:

- Parents and carers of pupils and students using mainstream home to school transport services
- Parents and carers of pupils and students using SEND home to school transport services
- Parent/carer representatives: FACT Bucks and SENDIAS
- Schools and special schools
- Internal service areas and senior leaders
- Further education providers and other educational settings
- General public
- Town and parish councils
- Buckinghamshire Council councillors

7. Methodology

7.1 Objectives-setting

The key objectives were:

- To consider feedback that had been received from students and families over the last year about the current Home to School Transport Policy introduced in March 2019.
- To provide a better experience for students and families using home to school transport through providing more choice and flexibility in home to school transport arrangements
- To support and promote increased independence for young people with special educational needs and disabilities as they become young adults, so that they are able to take part in work and social opportunities more easily.
- To ensure the Council is meeting its statutory duties for home to school transport set out in the Policy/Policy Statement and consultation documents; and is providing a service which meets the needs of children and young people who require transport assistance whilst ensuring value for money. There are no costs savings associated with any of the proposals, however it is recognised that Personal Transport Budgets may lead to a reduction in spend on Council organised transport in the longer term, creating a more sustainable service to meet increasing need.

7.2 Planning and research to inform the consultation approach

A significant amount of research, data gathering, benchmarking and modelling was undertaken as part of the wider policy review. This work helped the project team to understand the requirements for the consultation, develop the proposals for change and inform the policy development process.

This research included:

Understanding the needs of Buckinghamshire's population and the profile of the current cohort of children receiving home to school transport:

An analysis of the profile of key demographic groups currently receiving home to school transport shows the following:

- The overall pupil population in Buckinghamshire is growing.
- The percentage of pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) is growing, and the rate of growth in relation to this group is accelerating faster than growth in the general pupil population.

- The range of needs that this cohort of pupils has is increasingly complex and varied. This means that the Council needs to ensure that our policy is appropriate to meet the specific travel needs of pupils and students and sustainable to meet predicted levels of need in the future.

Best practice research and benchmarking of policies and arrangements in other local authorities:

Other local authorities' home to school transport policies and arrangements were researched. This included reviewing information on eligibility criteria, types of transport provision and arrangements and how post-16 transport is arranged and paid for.

The research helped to inform the development of the proposal on Personal Transport Budgets as a means of travel assistance, including for those students with SEND aged 16-19 who are continuing on an existing course of study. The proposed changes outlined in the consultation align with approaches taken by other local authorities.

7.3 Pre-engagement phase

The consultation was developed collaboratively through ongoing engagement with key stakeholders, including parents and carers and FACT Bucks, the parent carer forum in Buckinghamshire.

The project team carried out a number of pre-engagement discussion sessions with FACT Bucks to inform the full public consultation.

It was important to understand the experiences and views of parents, carers and families to help develop the consultation, particularly in relation to arrangements and payments for transport for eligible students with SEND aged 16-19. Therefore, a pre-engagement discussion group was also held in August 2020 with a group of parent and carers, all of whom have children who are using Post-16 SEND home to school transport in Buckinghamshire.

The topics discussed with the parents and carers at the discussion group were:

- Their experiences with the current Home to School Transport Policy and the Post-16 SEND transport charging arrangements
- Improvements they would like to see included in a future Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement
- Other concerns, views or comments on Buckinghamshire Council's Home to School Transport Policy
- How parents and carers would like to receive information about the consultation

The information provided by parents and carers at the discussion group helped to shape the consultation proposals and consultation approach.

7.4 Public consultation period

The project team developed the consultation survey and a range of accompanying documents using the pre-engagement feedback, the planning and research information and findings, consultation best practice methods and home to school transport project data.

An online survey was published on the Council's consultation portal, Your Voice Bucks. The following supporting information was also provided on the consultation page:

- A dedicated mailbox and phone number for the public to contact with questions, or to call or email to request a paper survey by post
- A consultation introduction document to explain the background and context for the consultation
- Supporting guidance for families which explained the proposals and how the proposed revised Policy would work in more detail; and provided answers to anticipated questions from families
- A specially developed easy read document to explain the consultation to people with additional needs
- A [specially produced video](#) to explain the Post-16 SEND transport proposed options for arranging and paying for transport
- A downloadable version of the survey for people to download, print and complete
- The proposed draft Home to School Transport Policy effective from the academic year 2021
- The proposed draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2021-22
- The Needs Assessment for the consultation

The survey design collected user and demographic data, to allow analysis of the results and possible impacts on different groups of residents. The survey asked respondents to give their postcodes, the age ranges of their children, whether any of their children have an Education, Health and Care Plan and to say whether their children currently use Council organised school transport. This information was requested to help the project team identify the type of transport used by the consultation respondents.

The survey was designed to allow residents to fully explain their responses and give in-depth free text feedback on every element and proposed change.

The consultation opened on 12 October 2020, ran for 8 weeks, and closed at midnight on 7 December 2020. The online survey was available throughout the consultation period.

8. Communications

The Council wanted to hear from as many residents and stakeholders as possible, therefore robust and extensive communications activity was planned and delivered.

A range of both universal and highly targeted communications channels and methods were used to reach both the key stakeholders directly as well as wider audience groups.

Two of the main elements of the communications plan were direct stakeholder emails and the social media campaign.

Direct stakeholder emails

Direct emails designed in the style of a newsletter were used to communicate directly with key stakeholders – parents of SEND children and students, headteachers and SEND schools and settings. Parents and carers of SEND students had informed us that direct newsletter-style emails were a form of communication that they preferred.



Figure 1: Example of newsletter-style email to stakeholders

The following direct emails were sent out during the course of the consultation:

Week no	Audience	Message	List members
1	Headteachers	Consultation now open	229
1	SEND settings	Consultation now open	57*
3	Parents/carers of SEND students aged 16-19 with EHCP	Consultation newsletter	550*

5	Parents/carers of Y11 SEND students	Consultation newsletter	191
6	Parents/carers of SEND students aged 16-19 with EHCP	Online event reminder	757**
8	Parents/carers of 16-19 SEND students with EHCP	Last chance	520*
8	Headteachers	Last chance	229
8	SEND settings	Last chance	55*
* Numbers differ due to people who unsubscribed from the mailing list.			
** This email list utilised secondary email addresses where available.			

Table 1: Summary of all stakeholder emails issued

Social media campaign

The social media campaign consisted of:

- Paid Facebook advertising focusing on SEND audience groups
- Paid Facebook advertising focusing on mainstream audience groups
- Organic Facebook posts throughout the consultation
- Twitter posts throughout the consultation

The social media campaign used a suite of specially-created graphics that covered both SEND and mainstream themes, designed for audience recognition across different posts during the consultation. These were augmented with posts promoting the online information events.





Figure 2: Examples of the graphics used in the social media campaign

The reach of the social media campaign was high, with organic posts performing in the top third of Buckinghamshire Council's overall social media output.

The table below shows a summary of the social media campaign performance. Although there will be some overlap in the groups, this shows that many thousands of people were made aware of the consultation, and that approximately 2,000 people engaged directly by clicking, sharing or liking the campaign's social media posts.

A total of 714 clicks through to the consultation page were generated as a result of the social media campaign.

Social media channel	Total number of posts or ads	Impressions (no. of times the posts were displayed)	Reach (no. of unique people who saw the posts)	Engagements (no. of interactions e.g. likes, comments, shares, link clicks)	Link clicks (no. of people who clicked through to the consultation page)
Facebook paid ads (SEND)	3	24,147	14,716	442	425 across all ads
Facebook paid ads (mainstream)	3	20,566	10,380	147	
Facebook organic	6	-	17,000	1,000	215

Twitter organic	11	27,318	-	470	74
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Table 2: Summary of social media campaign statistics

Other communications

Additional methods used to promote this consultation were:

- Press releases – distributed through the Council’s local media outlet distribution list. Press releases were also sent to other stakeholders including Buckinghamshire Council councillors, senior management, local MPs and town and parish councils
- The social media campaign was shared by local special interest social media groups such as FACT Bucks, Buckinghamshire Family Information Service and the Bucks Home to School Transport parents Facebook group
- Council staff were informed about the consultation using internal communications channels
- The Schools Bulletin was used to contact schools and ask them to inform relevant parents about the consultation
- The homepage of the Council website carried a promotional panel throughout the whole of the consultation period, which directly linked to the consultation page

The full communications plan and the social media campaign plan are provided in Appendices B and C.

9. Public engagement

Public engagement was a key element of the consultation approach, to enable all stakeholders to be able to engage directly with the Council to fully understand the consultation, share their views and ask questions; and also to give Council officers and the Cabinet Member opportunities to listen to residents’ views directly.

Online public engagement events

Two online public engagement events were scheduled and planned to be held during the consultation period, in November 2020. The two events were promoted as part of the overall communication activity and were published on the consultation page itself.

Despite extensive communications, the level of interest in registering to attend the online engagement events was very low, with less than 10 people booking to attend. The difficult decision was therefore made not to hold the events. Each of the individuals who had booked to attend the events were offered an individual online meeting or phone call in place of the online event.

Online SEND student engagement sessions

The project group felt it was very important to capture students’ views on future transport options. Therefore two online engagement sessions for students with SEND were developed and run in conjunction with two local special schools.

Because of the subject matter it was not possible to discuss the consultation survey questions in their existing format with the students. However, the sessions provided an alternative way to ascertain SEND students’ views on their current Council arranged transport, and to hear their views on alternative methods of travelling to education that they would consider using.

Sessions were held during November 2020 with a Year 11 year group at Alfriston School and with a Post-16 year group at Pebble Brook School.

The project group worked with the Council’s Specialist Participation team to develop worksheets which the students completed as part of their session preparation, and which were used as conversation prompts during the sessions.

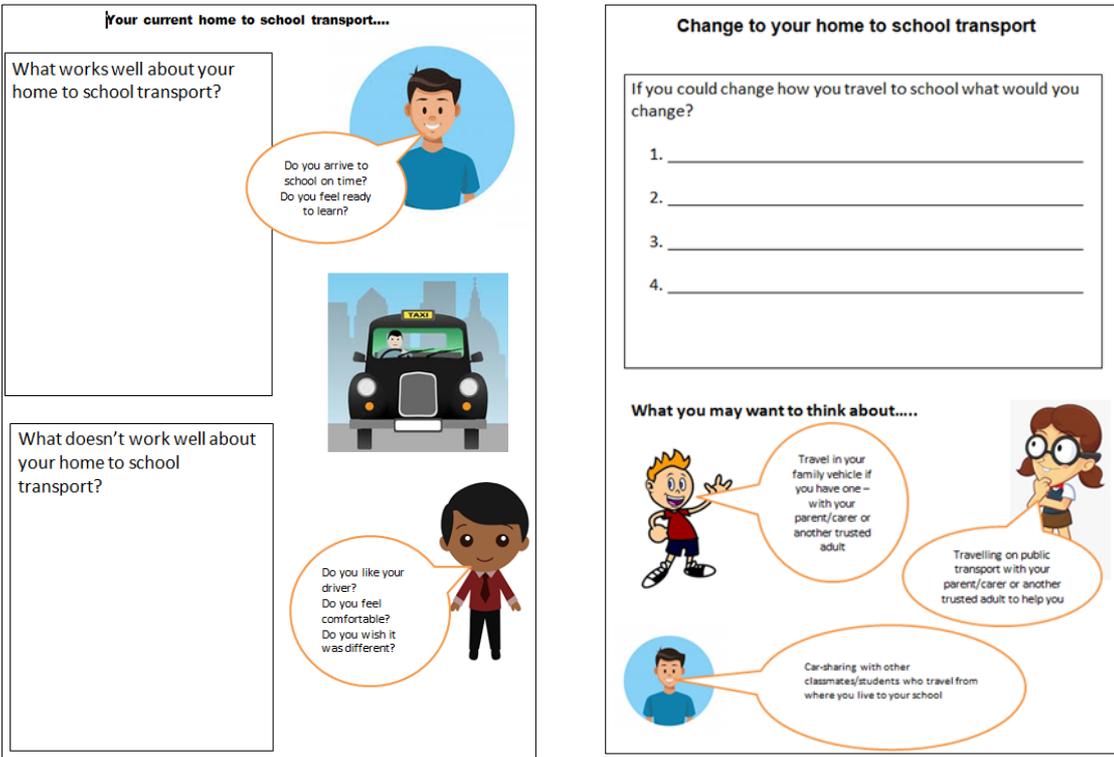


Figure 3: The materials used in the SEND student engagement sessions

During the sessions Council officers discussed the policy review and consultation with the students. The students were asked how they feel about their current transport experience using Council transport, as well as how their transport arrangements might be able to change with the proposed Post-16 transport options, and how the students

might feel about the flexibility and choice of arrangements that a Personal Transport Budget could bring.

The students were very engaged in the discussion and shared a range of views about both their current transport arrangements and on how they felt about the potential of using different ways to travel to their educational setting in the future. This feedback will be considered alongside the formal consultation responses.

10. Summary of consultation responses

The survey data has been analysed in-house by the Council’s Business Intelligence and Insight Team.

Responses to closed-ended questions have been analysed both overall and for different groups of people. Free text responses have also been analysed to identify key themes and categorised under the most common themes. All the free text comments received are provided in Appendix D.

10.1 Profile of respondents

- 74 responses were received in total.
- One organisational response was received and three additional emails containing feedback were also received.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents were parents or carers of children/young people currently in education.
- There were 5 responses from students, either aged 16-19 or aged 16-25 with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Responses were received from 3 education professionals, 3 transport professionals and 2 councillors/MPs.
- 7 respondents selected ‘other’, and these included parents of children not currently in education, local residents and village representatives.

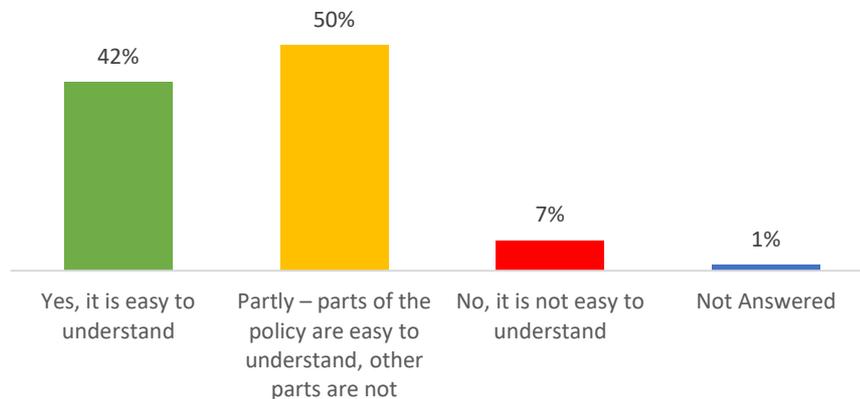
	Number of Responses	%age of Responses
Parent or carer of children or young people who are in education	55	74%
Other (please describe below)	7	9%
Student aged 16 -25 with a special educational need or disability	4	5%
Educational professional	3	4%
Transport professional	2	3%

Councillor or MP	2	3%
Student aged 16 -19	1	1%
Total Responses	74	

10.2 Understanding of the proposed Home to School Transport Policy and the proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

Question: Is the Draft Home to School Transport Policy clear and easy to understand?

All responses to this question:



	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, it is easy to understand	31	42%
Partly – parts of the policy are easy to understand, other parts are not	37	50%
No, it is not easy to understand	5	7%
Not Answered	1	1%

- 73 respondents answered this question (99%).
- 92% of respondents said that either all or parts of the policy were easy to understand.

- Of the 16 respondents who were parents/carers with at least one child using Council transport paid for by the parent/carer, 100% said that all or parts of the policy were easy to understand.
- The free text comments on this question focused on the requirement for young people to stay in education, employment or training until the age of 18 while free Council transport ends when a pupil is no longer in statutory education in line with the national policy; the amount of Personal Transport Budget that a household would receive; and specific parts of the Policy that still were not otherwise clear.
- Examples of the comments received include:

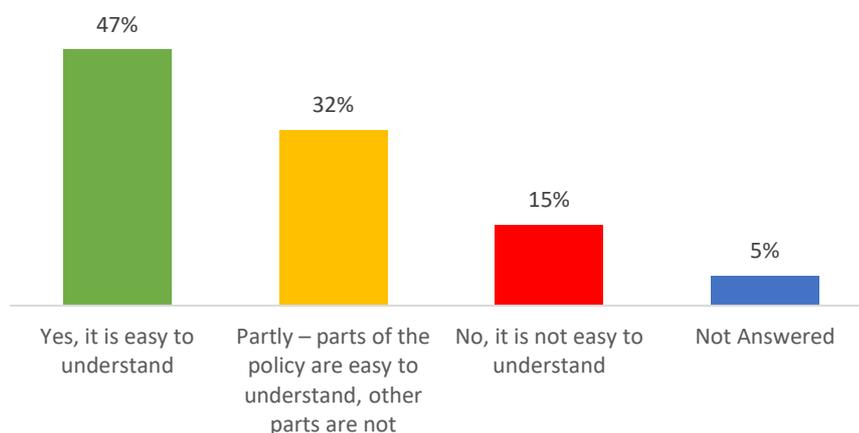
“The nearest school section is very confusing. I assume you are trying to say that the nearest school only has to be listed as a preference rather than the first preference. I had to read this a few times to decipher it.”

“It doesn't seem to cover that SEND still need to be in Education or Training until 18 and how they are supposed to get there without free transport.”

“The guidance is still not clear on personal transport budgets, these amounts should be published for all to see as other local authorities do, this should not be personalised and therefore subject to discretion by the Council.”

Question: Overall, is the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement clear and easy to understand?

All responses to this question:



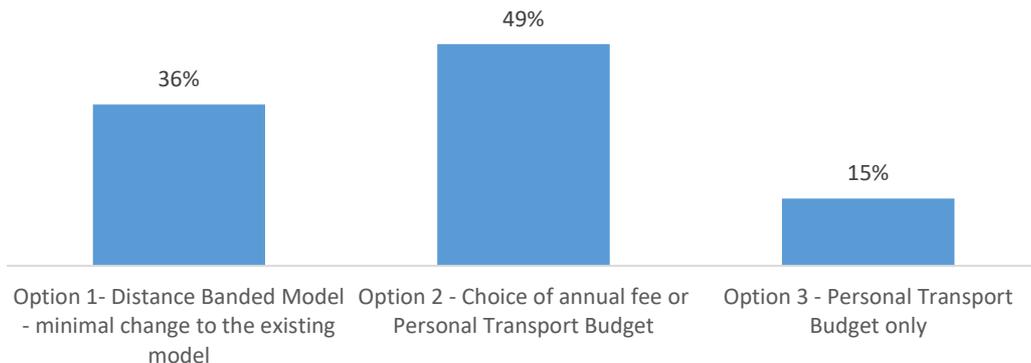
	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, it is easy to understand	35	47%
Partly – parts of the policy are easy to understand, other parts are not	24	32%
No, it is not easy to understand	11	15%
Not Answered	4	5%

- 70 respondents answered this question (94%).
- 79% of respondents agreed that the Transport Policy Statement was either easy to understand or partly easy to understand.
- Parents/carers with one or more child aged 16+ were less likely to agree, with 66% of those saying that all or parts of the Transport Policy Statement were easy to understand. 28% of those parents/carers said that it was not easy to understand.

10.3 Options for arranging and paying for Post-16 SEND transport

Question: Please rank in order of preference, the three options for arranging and paying for post-16 student transport.

All responses to this question:



	Number of Responses for each option ranked 1,2 or 3			% of Responses for each option ranked 1,2 or 3		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Option 1- Distance Banded Model - minimal change to the existing model	24	24	17	36%	36%	27%

Option 2 - Choice of annual fee or Personal Transport Budget	33	32	3	49%	48%	5%
Option 3 - Personal Transport Budget only	10	10	44	15%	15%	69%
<i>Note: Not all respondents ranked each option in each ranking position.</i>						

- 68 respondents answered this question (92%).
- Across all respondents, the most preferred option was **Option 2 - Choice of annual fee or Personal Transport Budget**, with nearly half of all respondents (49%) ranking this as their first preference.
- The second ranking option was **Option 1 – Distance banded model**; with the least preferred option being **Option 3 – Personal Transport Budget only**.
- 57% of responses from parents/carers ranked Option 2 as their first preference.
- The preferences selected by parents/carers with at least one child aged 16 or over were closer: 44% of those ranked Option 2 first, 38% ranked Option 1 second and 19% ranked Option 3 third.
- The free text comments on this question in relation to Option 2 centred around having more flexibility and choice, with the caveat expressed that Council organised transport should be present as an alternative. Comments favouring Option 1, the current model, suggested that it was the most straightforward option. Examples of the comments received include:

“Families have enough to deal with, they don’t need more stress sorting transport out too.”

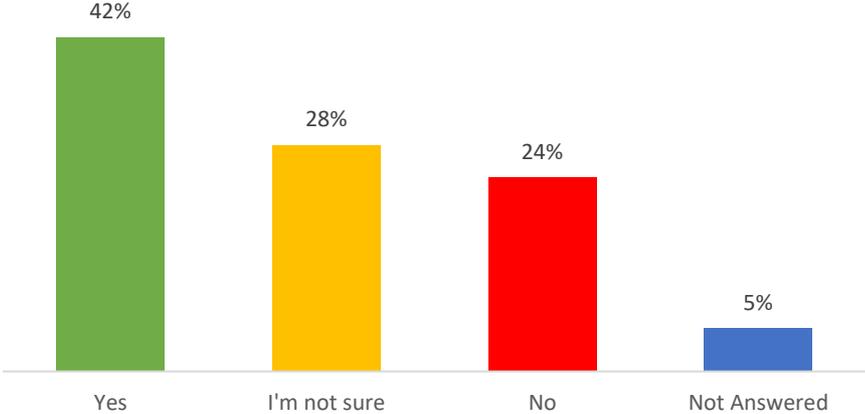
“As students approach adulthood it's good for them to begin to have choices over which they are in control.”

“I would select Option 1 as the first choice AS LONG AS IT IS A FAIR SYSTEM. As previously commented, a student travelling to school/an education setting two days per week SHOULD NOT be paying the same amount as someone travelling five days per week.”

10.4 Views on freedom and choice in relation to home to school transport

Question: Would you like to have more freedom and choice to organise your own transport arrangements?

All responses to this question:

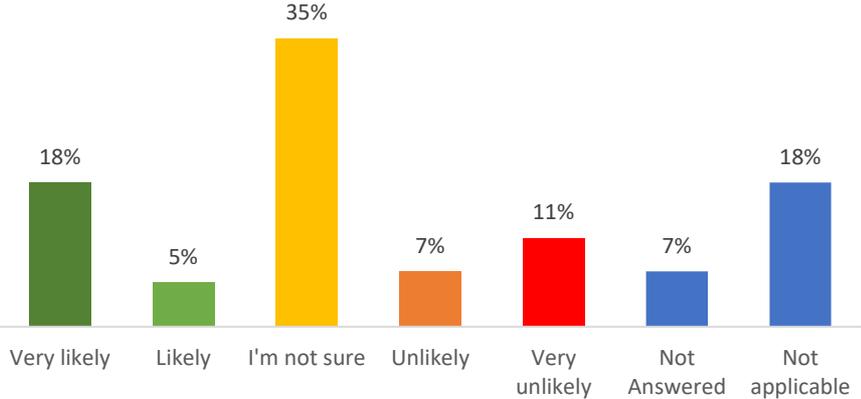


	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes	31	42%
I'm not sure	21	28%
No	18	24%
Not Answered	4	5%

- 70 respondents answered this question (94%).
- Responses for this question were mixed: while 42% of respondents overall said they would like to have more freedom and choice to organise their own transport arrangements, 28% of respondents were unsure.
- 46% of parents/carers with one or more child with an EHCP responded that they would like to have more freedom and choice to organise their own transport arrangements.
- Positive responses were slightly higher for parents/carers with at least one child over the age of 16, with 50% agreeing; however, 39% of those respondents said they were unsure.

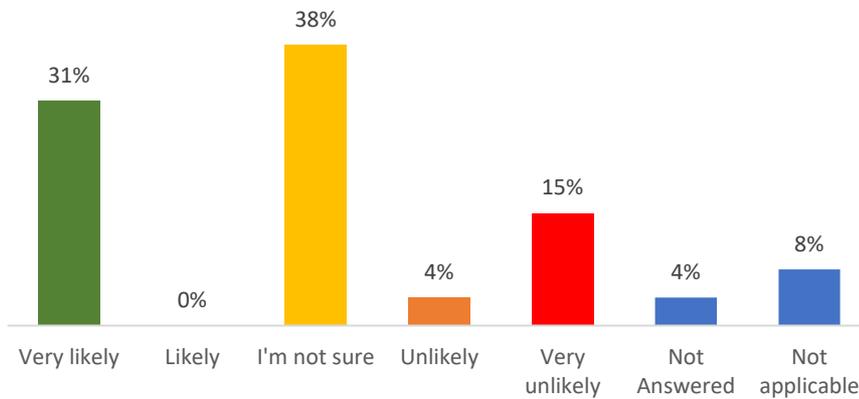
Question: How likely are you to take up a Personal Transport Budget if that option is available?

All responses to this question:



	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Very likely	13	18%
Likely	4	5%
I'm not sure	26	35%
Unlikely	5	7%
Very unlikely	8	11%
Not Answered	5	7%
Not applicable	13	18%

Responses from parents/carers with one or more child with an EHCP:



	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Very likely	8	31%
Likely	0	0%
I'm not sure	10	38%
Unlikely	1	4%
Very unlikely	4	15%
Not Answered	1	4%
Not applicable	2	8%

- 68 respondents answered this question (94%).
- The most common response to this question was that respondents were unsure, with 35% of overall respondents selecting this answer. 23% of responses would be likely or very likely to take up a Personal Transport Budget.
- Parents/carers with one or more child with an EHCP were most likely to take up a Personal Transport Budget, with 31% saying they would be very likely to do so.
- 10% of parents/carers with one or more child aged 0-11 were likely to take up a Personal Transport Budget.
- The free text comments on this question that related to Personal Transport Budgets centred around the need to ensure safe, proper and effective use of Personal Transport Budgets. Examples of the comments received include:

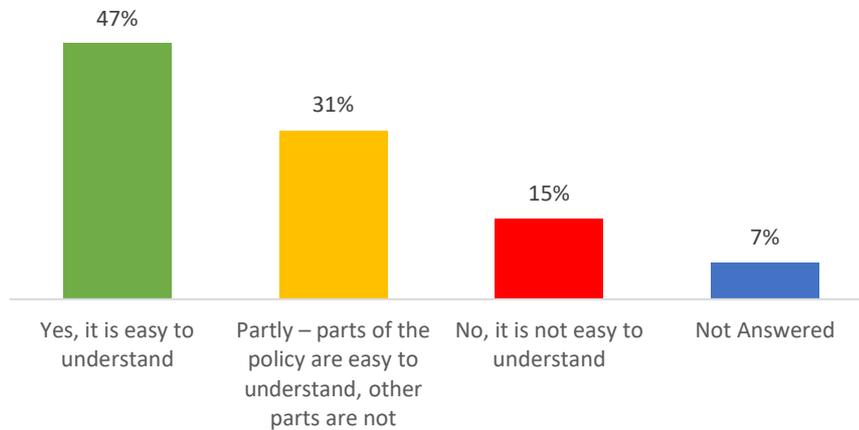
“I just have concerns over minimum standards of transport... This feels like it’s open to abuse and possible exploitation.”

“Make the guidance much clearer as other local councils, by making it personalised it’s open to abuse and an unfair system, clearly display the rates/bands for all to see.”

10.5 Other clarifications in the proposed Home to school Transport Policy and proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement

Question: Are the eligibility criteria for travel assistance for students with SEND clear and easy to understand?

All responses to this question:



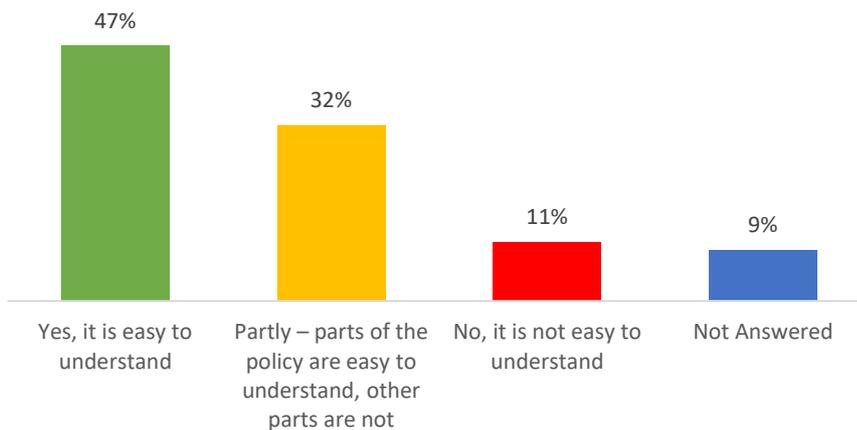
	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, it is easy to understand	35	47%
Partly – parts of the policy are easy to understand, other parts are not	23	31%
No, it is not easy to understand	11	15%
Not Answered	5	7%

- 68 respondents answered this question (94%).
- 78% of respondents said that the eligibility criteria for travel assistance for students with SEND were either easy to understand or partly easy to understand.

- Of parents/carers with one or more children with an EHCP, 80% responded that the eligibility criteria for travel assistance for students with SEND were either easy to understand or that parts were easy to understand.

Question: Is the information about travel assistance for 19 year-olds with SEND clear and easy to understand?

All responses to this question:

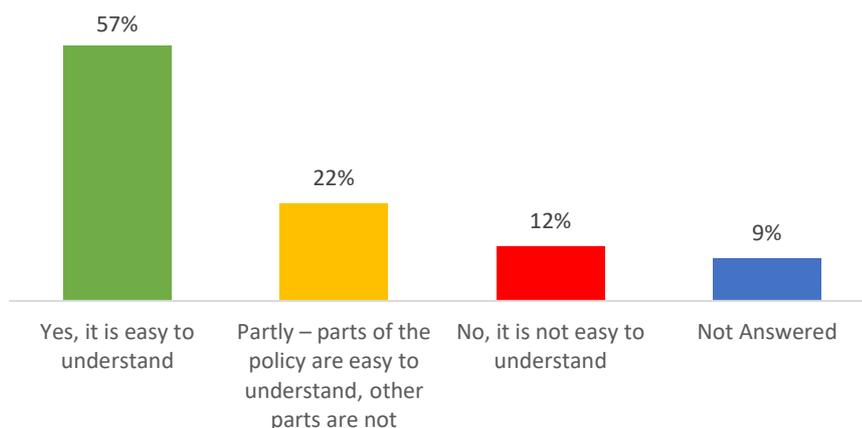


	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, it is easy to understand	35	47%
Partly – parts of the policy are easy to understand, other parts are not	24	32%
No, it is not easy to understand	8	11%
Not Answered	7	9%

- 67 respondents answered this question (90%).
- 80% of respondents said that the information about travel assistance for 19 year-olds with SEND was either easy to understand or parts were easy to understand.
- Response rates were similar for parents/carers with one or more children aged 19+ (78%) and for parents/carers with one or more child with an EHCP (77%).

Question: Is the information about how outstanding payments will be managed clear and easy to understand?

All responses to this question:



	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Yes, it is easy to understand	42	57%
Partly – parts of the policy are easy to understand, other parts are not	16	22%
No, it is not easy to understand	9	12%
Not Answered	7	9%

- 67 respondents answered this question (91%).
- 79% of respondents agreed that the information about how outstanding payments will be managed was either easy to understand or that parts were easy to understand.
- Results were slightly lower for parents/carers with one or more child with an EHCP (73%), parents/carers with one or more child aged 0-11 (65%) and parents/carers with one or more child currently receiving free Council transport (70%).
- 94% of parents/carers currently paying for Council transport for one or more children agreed that this information was either easy to understand or that parts were easy to understand.

10.6 Additional feedback received

Organisational response

One organisational response was received. The key themes arising from this response will be examined carefully and used to help shape the revised Policy and Statement.

Feedback via email

Three emails were received outside of the consultation responses, containing feedback about the consultation.

Feedback included a suggestion regarding extending Personal Transport Budgets beyond SEND transport. Two further email individual preferences for options outlined in the Post-16 SEND transport arrangements section of the consultation were received; one favoured Option 1 and the other favoured Option 2. This means that the overall lead preference for Option 2 has not changed as a result of the two additional preferences.

Feedback from young people

The views expressed by young people during the SEND student pre-engagement sessions were very mixed, spanning the full spectrum of opinion.

When students were discussing how they currently travel to their educational setting, some said that the same taxi driver had driven them for a long time; that the driver was very friendly and that they felt the taxi journey was social interaction that was an important part of their day. Some students said that they had had many changes of driver, that some drivers didn't talk to them or interact at all, and that it was quite stressful for them waiting for the taxi or minibus to arrive each day.

When the students were discussing how they might be able to travel to their educational setting in the future if one of the Post-16 SEND transport options using Personal Transport Budgets was introduced, some students welcomed that choice. They said that they would prefer to travel differently to their educational setting, for example in their family car with either their parents/carers, a trusted adult or with a school friend living locally; and they expressed the view that they would arrive at their setting feeling more relaxed and would feel less stressed. Other students however, said that they thought Personal Transport Budgets could be difficult for some families to manage or organise transport.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The consultation response

The consultation was a very useful process and was conducted thoroughly using a best practice approach and methods. The communications plan which supported the consultation was extensive, robust and effective at raising awareness. The consultation was promoted widely, both to universal audiences and through targeting to specific, key audience groups and stakeholders.

It is clear that the communications activity achieved a good reach into the intended audience groups; for example over 700 clicks through to the consultation page were generated as a result of the social media campaign.

However, this public awareness was not converted into a high number of consultation responses. Reasons for this might include:

- During the current very unusual times, many people have not prioritised completing the online survey for the consultation.
- The complexity and detail of the subject matter may have filtered out some people who were interested in the subject, but not fully committed to taking part in the consultation.
- There have been other opportunities throughout the last year to provide feedback on the current policy.

The 74 responses received should be viewed in the context of the size of the key audience affected by the main changes proposed - parents/carers of Post-16 SEND students eligible for transport assistance. This current cohort of chargeable users totals approximately 250 transport users. Therefore, as a percentage of key audience size, a lower response level is to be expected and becomes a more sizeable proportion of the overall key audience group.

The specifics of each question and outcomes have been detailed in the main body of the report, but some common themes can be taken from the consultation as a whole.

- The consultation results show that overall, the proposed Home to School Transport Policy and proposed Post-16 Transport Policy Statement are either clear and easy to understand or partly clear and easy to understand.
- Within the free text comments respondents have highlighted certain sections that are not sufficiently clear. The Council will review those highlighted areas carefully to understand where further improvements can be made. As part of this process, the Council will continue to work with parents and carers and FACT Bucks.

- The consultation question results show a clear appetite from parents and carers towards wanting to have more choice and freedom in organising transport for their children.
- In relation to options for Post-16 SEND transport, it is also clear that across all groups, respondents preferred Option 2 – Choice of annual fee or Personal Transport Budget.
- Respondents have indicated that there is an interest in Personal Transport Budgets being available to students other than those with SEND.

11.2 Next steps

The Council will carefully review all of the consultation responses received as well as the free text responses received. All of the previous feedback received from parents, carers and families over the last year will also be taken into account. This includes feedback and comments received directly from a group of parents and carers regarding SEND transport at a meeting with them held in January 2020, which was very well attended. Some of the themes which arose from that session included:

- Parents/carers feeling penalised for their SEND child's needs meaning that their educational setting was further away from home than most mainstream pupils have to travel.
- Families feeling that paying for 5 days per week for Post-16 SEND transport when their child might only be attending their educational setting for 2 days per week.
- Parents/carers feeling that the process for applying to receive support for transport funding was arduous.

The Council will review the proposed Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement in light of all the feedback received. The proposed Policy and Statement will then be subject to the relevant Council approval process and will be published in April 2021.

12. Appendices

- Appendix A: Copy of consultation questionnaire
- Appendix B: Communications plan
- Appendix C: Social media delivery plan
- Appendix D: Free text comments