

Consultation free text comments

This appendix contains all free text comments made by consultation respondents. The comments are copied directly; spelling and/or factual errors have not been corrected.

Do you have any other comments about the clarifications in the Home to School Transport Policy, or parts you still find difficult to understand?

We would like clarity over the fact kids have to stay in education until 18 years which is not a choice yet the LA choose to make parents of Sen kids pay for transport. Most of the parents have already had to pay for support due to failures within the LA and they keep hitting parents in the pocket. the section about the personal transport budget is not clear, other local authorities make it very clear in their guidance the amount of the PTB

The clarifications on including your nearest school as one of the preferences have made things less clear in parts, because 'nearest suitable school' is used throughout the policy. It would be helpful to have one or more examples, particularly to clarify what happens in the case where the nearest suitable school is included as preference 3 (for example), the student is allocated a place at schools 1 or 2 instead - what happens to their transport? Does it make a difference if the nearest school is in our out of Bucks?

Also slightly unclear is the entitlement for Reception if the child has a birthday in Spring or Summer term. Given that schools in Bucks expect children to attend from the September of the year in which they turn 5, surely the transport should be provided from then?"

I think more clarity around pupils with SEND but do not have an EHCP (considering these are really hard to get even when there is a need)

"We should get a free bus to our catchment school, we did in the old days it's not fair for parents to pay £1,000 to get our son to his catchment school and I have a special needs son to which I have to pay £1,500 that's £2,500 a year just on transport before thinking about school uniform which is about £500 and a laptop that my other son will need this is so unfair on family. Buckinghamshire should stay in Buckinghamshire catchment

You are killing family finance and butting the under pressure. Please stop it"

whilst it does reference school choices, perhaps needs to be more clear in terms of nearest school, especially when some parents may only be selecting based on getting into one of the counties selective schools (eg Aylesbury Grammar School or Aylesbury High School), rather than just selecting between, say, Waddesdon & Aylesbury Vale Academy.

"Current upper limit of 45p per mile has been set for 16-19. No obvious indication if 45p per mile is the normal amount of assistance to be provided or less.

A clear explanation of how much parents under given example situations can be expected to receive would be useful, so budgeting decisions on which college to attend can be made with the most reasonable information available."

The policy seems to be purposely vague and this makes it hard to understand the details that really matter - what will happen to my children's school transport provision.

"My daughter didn't get a place on the school bus. She now has to get 2 buses to school alone at the age of 11 it makes her very nervous not to be with her school friends and is also very expensive for us she has to wait for buses in the dark in a rural location. There are also no pavements where we live, making it dangerous.

Why do children need to put their nearest school as it may not suit their needs.

Thank you"

It says that the council has a responsibility to assist Post 16 year olds with travel to school under the age of 19, what does that really mean? As a parent of a 16 year old there has been no offer of assistance at all, no letter from the council or offer of any help from anyone in Bucks. Friends in Herts received a letter from Herts CC with the travel options for their children and an offer of a discounted travel card, it would be good if Bucks could at least make contact with the children when they turn 16.

You need to make the process simple for ALL parents to access

This doesn't mention grammar schools.

Does the order of preference have any bearing on whether you will receive free transport?

"I have issues with how seats are allocated and transport is provided for post 16 education. Primarily why out of catchment pupils are issued seats over in catchment pupils who have previously travelled on the school bus from year 7-11.

It seems that the in catchment pupils in years 12 & 13 then get pushed to the bottom of the waiting list below out of catchment pupils.

Surely pupils inside catchment should be prioritized for seats over out of catchment pupils regardless of whether they are in years 7-11 or 12 & 13.

I do not understand how these proposed changes will help pupils in the the Edlesborough, Dagnall & Northall villages who travel to The Cottlesloe School in Wing will improve the current situation. These pupils have no alternative method of transport as there is no public transport from the villages to Wing. How will these changes ensure these year 12 & 13 pupils can access their further education at their catchment facility?"

I find it difficult to understand how you can justify charging when the student shares a taxi with a fully council funded child, knowing that the taxi company is paid per journey, regardless how many children are in the taxi. So if two children are transported who are in year 10 and 11 one year, the following year when the same two children now in year 11 and 12 are transported, one has to pay. The costs have not changed and the amount paid to the taxi company has not changed so I fail to understand how you can justify charging anything to parents

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

Pleased to see you are looking for views this time from parents of SEN children. We were not informed or advised about the initial change of charging for post 16 transport when it was bought in. It was a struggle to find the money to pay and due to distance we fell into the most expensive category. We should not have been penalised financially for the fact that Bucks Council failed to provide suitable education for our daughter closer to home. Your appeals process was a shambles and contradicted all that was said at a meeting by your officers. You should include CLEAR information about the appeals process and how it works. To be told you will get more detailed information about why your appeal was rejected and for us to then have to chase you for that information was disgraceful. You should include up to date contact details with phone numbers where the messages are responded to and email addresses that are valid and will get an actual response.

They just more complications to an over complicated policy.

"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 equivalent schools system doesn't seem to take into account the Berks or Herts border. A school in Slough may be closer or more appropriate than one in Bucks. Likewise, Bovington may be the nearest school."

Either abolish 11+, or determine that grammar schools are the settings capable of providing education "appropriate to the child's ability, aptitude....". It is socially divisive charging transport of a tax on access to education geared to more capable children.

I am confused that you state the statutory school age of 16 when it is the law now that all students stay in education until they are 18. This provides a great element of confusion - if students stay in school until they are 18 they are following the statutory requirements.

Can be made more concise. Some parts are difficult to understand. Creative writing imagination needs to go into overhauling entire write-up of policy as retention levels are poor which normally is a good indicator of any written policy.

This states the personal budget cannot be used to access services from the council but I thought that was in option 2 that could be done.

"Please please don't take our transport away
My son go's to a special school in Mk its the only school that can meet his needs I would be lost if he didn't go to school
Please don't make life harder than it is please"

A specific example is regarding the requirement for parents to put as one of their preferences, their nearest school, to be considered for free transport. For the average parent, navigating the policy and guidelines for secondary school applications this will not make any sense. Why select, as a preference, a school which may not be a catchment school or where the resident has no relation with it? For example, Marsworth village residents are now being told their nearest secondary school is John Colet in Wendover, when their catchment school is The Cottlesloe School in Wing. In

order to be eligible for free transport they are required to put John Colet as one of their preferences, yet if they check with the free school transport checker tool, it will categorically tell them that the only school they will be eligible for free transport to is John Colet and that they will have to apply for paid for transport to The Cottesloe as their second nearest school. If they do try and drill down into the policy, they will be very confused as the policy is seemingly at odds with the results of the transport checker. Perhaps the transport checker needs to be amended so this page is more reflective of the draft policy? For instance, perhaps the nearest school results should have an explanation of what parents should do if their nearest school is not their catchment school and/or school of choice. I would like the transport checker results to say "Eligibility for free transport to this school will be assessed by considering whether places are available at a nearer school in the results. To be eligible for free transport to this school please ensure that you have also included in your preferences a nearer school or schools to you.

my daughter should have milage money given to her from 2010 till now i want to know why this has never happened i would like a personal budget for her transport as my daughter already has a personal budget for her education i take her to and from all the tutors

"I believe that parts are very misleading especially around the Special educational needs (EHCP). Once a school is named on the EHCP it becomes the nearest suitable school and then if over the distance free transport should be provided. This is not based on age, mobility etc.

I also think that Bucks should reconsider charging 16+ with EHCP's as lawfully they have to stay in education until 18 years. Bucks do not seem to want to look after those children with EHCP plans."

"I feel that statements as regards the impact of absence on personal transport budgets is unclear.

I feel that post-16 funding criteria for transport is unclear

What are the exact differences between mileage reimbursement and a Personal transport budget. Will the associated Claims and payment process be changed ? Currently claims for mileage reimbursement are made in arrears via a form signed by school with payment made 30 days later. Whilst my claims have to date been paid promptly I am aware of many families whose claims have not been paid promptly. This can mean £500 or more per month of transport costs that parents are having to outlay for their Child with SEND. I think is important for claims and payment policies to be included in this document for the newly proposed Personal Transport Budget."

"3. The nearest suitable school should be a school with places available. Parents will not look into the policy. They will go online to the school transport checker for eligibility purposes. Eg. If a child lives in Marsworth. You click onto transport checker and put in your post code. At this point it will tell you that you are eligible for transport to John Colet. It also says you are not eligible for tree travel to Cottesloe. This is actually incorrect. John Colet is an out of catchment school. Absolutely no chance of getting a place at the school. It should say at this point in big print however all you have do do is add John Colet as a preference to qualify for free transport."

I believe school transport for children with SEN should be free, as many SEN have to travel a long distance, in order for their educational needs to be met, through no fault of their own.

A simple but difficult solution to help to reduce school transport costs would be for all areas to have a good local school. A significant amount of secondary school transport costs in Buckinghamshire arise from the ability of the 13 grammar schools in the County to enforce a selective system within the secondary schools. Many parents in Bucks who have the ability will send their children to bordering comprehensive schools thereby leaving their local school with a poor reputation. These schools are then filled with pupils who live outside the catchment area and will require school transport assistance. One policy for B.C. to consider is to persuade all or some of the grammar schools to convert to comprehensive or partially selective schools. If Burnham Grammar became partially selective it would serve a large number of pupils who currently have to travel to Bourne End Academy.

My particular interest is in the provision of transport for SEND pupils over the age of 19. I refer in particular to section 7.1 of the documentation. I am currently going through a complaints procedure directly related to this. This is absolutely the approach I have been looking for. If information about this approach had been made known to me, I doubt I would have initiated my complaint at all. This looks like a well considered, helpful and flexible approach which should address my concerns with the current system. As regards the comments around 90% attendance, it needs to be remembered that SEND pupils will "crash" when they are ill and that a flexible and considerate approach is required.

Please provide details of anything else you think we should consider about the Home to School Transport Policy?

As above. The policy needs a total over haul

I think you should automatically renew places on school transport especially if paying via direct debit. I missed your email in June /July due to work pressure and as a result my daughter was denied a place on the school bus and I now have to drive her, this is not very environmentally friendly .

There should be something specific about Grammar Schools. If a pupil is eligible to attend Grammar School, then they should be eligible for free transport to their nearest Grammar even if that is not one of the nearest schools. Otherwise access to Grammar schools becomes about practicality and cost of transport and is more likely to be taken up by those living in the urban locations where those schools are located. It should be about academic merit/aptitude, not geographic location.

The policy should not include religious schools as a person's closest school, the same as it does not include grammar schools

"Environmental implications have not been considered. A link to the Council's Environmental policy and statement of commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in line with the current Government targets should be included.

Given the Covid circumstances, a clearer commitment to hygiene and welfare would be of benefit.

There is no indication or link to the process the council uses to select private coach companies to provide the transport that I can see."

Having gone through the rushed, and unprofessionally changes at the last minute to my eldest child's transport provision in 2019, I would like you to consider a more coherent, professional approach to the launch message of the new policy changes

Parents who have one child who drives to school (has parking allocated or rights) should not be provided with free transport for other siblings at the same school or schools within easy walking of each other

Transport to the nearest non-selective school , based on academic and faith, should be provided.

As students MUST stay in a form of education to the age of 18, free home to school transport should be extended to this age too. A child can be on the same school transport for 5 years and then all of a sudden lose their place but must still attend school or if they keep the place, the council will profiteer from children that must stay in education.

It would be helpful with the ongoing coronavirus situation to be able to provide assistance to emergency services/NHS workers in ensuring there was a place offered to the children of such workers.

Make transport affordable, at nearly £800 for a bus pass (assuming a space is available normally it isn't) school buses are not affordable. Parents are all driving to school causing congestion around schools and pollution.

The process needs to be made, easy for SEN children don't get stressed. I have had the last two years where bus passes have been sent to us for my child a week before starting school. This then brought anxiety to my SEN child. Not acceptable for the county

Parents should have more responsibility for getting their own children too school. Not sure why tax payers should fund this, they should consider schools when choosing where to live!!

"There should be an assumption that children should be able to walk/cycle to school if they want, and they should be incentivised to do so.

In my village of Haddenham, this would require improvements to infrastructure. The current village road system is not safe for vulnerable cyclists - the pop-up active travel scheme has attempted to address some of this, but does not even reach as far as the schools. If we are to make progress, these issues must be addressed seriously. Secondary school children need to travel out of the village - there are aspirational schemes linking Haddenham to both Thame and Aylesbury, but both are stalled, and in the case of Thame, this has been going on for years. These must be unblocked immediately. An increasing number of our kids are being allocated to Princes Risborough, and there is no safe cycling provision for them.

Obviously, Covid has complicated the situation, but we should be careful only to incentivise private car transport as a last resort.

And finally, we need a commitment to electrifying the buses used for school transport."

"Provision for pupils in the schools catchment should be prioritised over out of catchment pupils.

Travel at a competitive cost should be provided for pupils where there is no alternative public transport. Currently the fees for the school bus exceed public transport tickets which can be used multiple times."

Please see above. Having spent time and effort from approx June 2019 to May 2020 to resolve our issue with being charged by Bucks County it was incredibly frustrating. It was not a satisfactory outcome. The bureaucracy involved was incredible. The stress immense that was heaped on our family from an incredibly complex and also incompetent system. I welcome anything you can do to set that right, simplify and improve your system and your Appeals process.

Can parents find out what level of personal budget they would be entitled to before deciding whether to accept this. How could parents ensure that the transport they organise is safe e.g. taxi drivers

"In light of the fact that parents of children with an EHCP are as entitled as any other parents to work, it would be beneficial for these parents if the policy was able to allow for the following suggestion: School transport will normally only pick up and set down at or near the child's home address. Consideration may be given to requests to pick up and set down at other locations e.g. childminders provided this is notified in writing and does not involve any further expenditure for the Local Authority.

My other point is regarding age at which transport starts. A concession has been made for children the term prior to reaching statutory school age but as the expectation (and preference of schools) in Buckinghamshire is that children start school the September of the year in which they are 5, shouldn't consideration be given to children who will turn 5 during that academic year otherwise isn't the council favouring autumn term DOBs and penalising spring/summer DOBs?"

Where the council contracts out the service to private companies, some control over pricing for non free school meals pupils so that payments for transport are in line with council prices. After the initial year, XXXXXX have nearly doubled their pricing for transport.

"The poor level of transport in Bucks. Children in rural areas are reliant on this type of transport to get to school at all or parents need to take them.

It seems odd that the rules are completely different for low income families. If a parent suddenly gets a job, they will no longer qualify for the very reason they could take the job. We need to ensure all students are able to get to an appropriate school.

It is also not appropriate to assume a child should attend a Faith school if this is the nearest school with space. Parents should be allowed to reject Faith school spaces on religious grounds and be provided transport to the nearest alternative school."

Transport for SEND post 16 should be free of charge. Many students will drop out and not attend 6th form due to the travel cost. This does not promote staying in education/learning till age 18.

You should consider that we as parents of SEND children don't have the choice of sending our children to a local school. So we have no choice but to have transport but we are penalised because we need to pay for that transport.

There is no point naming the nearest suitable school if you are outside the catchment area for the school and have no ability to attend it?

If a student boards, their rate should be pro-rata'd to the number of journeys they actually take. A student travelling to school the equivalent of two days per week should not have to pay the same rate as someone travelling five days per week irrespective of the fact that five days may be cheaper than the charge incurred. This is an incredibly unfair and unjustified system.

SEND children's rights to select the most appropriate school based on need rather than proximity requires clarification.

"Bus transport should be provided to schools such as Bucks UTC. Currently students, including those starting at 14, are not eligible under current rules and have to apply to Bucks UTC directly for support. If they did so, they may only be eligible if their parents receive certain benefits and of course, this school has a limited budget like any other. That these children have chosen a different, but equally valid and respected path in secondary education should not disadvantage them. We need more skilled people in this county and country and there are particular shortages in the skills provided by places like Bucks UTC. We should be encouraging more students to attend, not raise obstacles. I understand the council budget is always under pressure, and now more so than ever, but please consider this. I am sure a way can be found working with parents and schools, be that no charge, a small fee or an income-related grant with a request for sponsorship from businesses operating in the county."

"If we all had to organise transport for our SEND children post 16 (ie, option 3), how can we get any information that taxis are approved? Safe? used to dealing with people with special needs? I can't possibly take my child to school as I work, it would have a negative impact on his independence as well. It makes no difference that he would get money to support a younger sibling (irrelevant), or leasing a car. It is incredibly difficult, in my rural location, to find anyone who could take my child to school and bring him home every day.

Option 3 is a total non-starter."

"I would like to know when my son XXXX will receive his transportation to and from college, he has already been accepted by the council County Hall Aylesbury.

I have to arrive at my workplace late every day and leave early to make sure my son gets to college."

"My son goes to a special needs in MK this is the only school that can meet his needs please don't make life harder than it is

I will be having my other son going to Risborough in September that is going to cost £1,000 to get him to school

So I could be paying out a year £2,000 + just on bus/taxi

Please life is hard enough it's putting a lot on our finances"

As above, amendments are needed to the Free Transport Checker Page to make the results and the guidance notes on that page more reflective of the relevant areas regarding nearest school preferences in the Draft Policy.

i would like all our transport money paid to us pleas

Due to environmental issues combined travelling via coach or buses to all schools should be considered. School infrastructure does not provide parking spaces for students on site and there are no or little charging facilities. These facilities are for staff only who park onsite. Thus environmentally one coach/ bus for all will improve the impact to the environment and fall more in line with governments reduced omissions.

As above the policy is very misleading and a document to prevent children accessing transport even if eligible.

"10.3. Change of address. - again all around nearest suitable school. If a family are moving you have stated they would then need to apply for a place at the nearest suitable school. What is the nearest suitable school. My view is that the nearest suitable school must be a school that you can get a place ie within catchment. Not a school which is out of catchment and there isn't a chance of you obtaining a place.

Glossary of terms.

You have removed definition on Nearest Suitable school. - should say. The nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education etc....."

I still don't see why the cut off age is 16. Why should children attending school (which is compulsory or another suitable undertaking), have to pay more for transport? Their earning ability (and the parents') hasn't changed. The cut off should be "in further education".

As above, focusing on SEN children, I believe transport to be free for SEN children. Especially as many post 16 years old are playing catch up with GCSE's due to SEN schools being full and lack of SEN schools that can meet the needs of children with hi-functioning autism.

My 17 year old son who has ASD was promised transport to college this year - we are still waiting.

Where a the nearest school is and has been rated as requires improvement or worse for more than one whole school year, pupils should be entitled to transport assistance to attend their nearest alternative school which is rated as good or better.

Circumstances around the parents ability to make themselves available to transport, in particular if they have work commitments. The impact that non working makes on the household.

"Current policy is discriminatory, in that it only provides transport to the nearest school rather than the nearest appropriate school. This clearly discriminates against children who are selected for a Grammar School, when transport is only provided to the nearest school, which may well not be a Grammar School. This is particularly the case in the South of Buckinghamshire.

New Policy should cause this discrimination to cease."

Do you have any other comments about the overall layout and content of the Home to School Transport Policy?

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

A summary table would be useful.

Still not clear on SEND 16-19 with no EHCP

School should be free to catchment

"yes, some mistakes.

Section 4.1, under ""Chiltern Railways"" for Aylesbury Vale Parkway station, makes reference to Arriva running route 16. They do not, it is now with Red Rose. Whether this affects the validity of such tickets I'm not aware, but also maybe worth clarifying if they're also valid on Redline route 4. For Aylesbury station, there is reference of routes that no longer exist (eg Purple route 7), and perhaps needs to be updated to reflect current routes/operators once validity is verified."

Providing example case studies within tables or an appendix would help it to be easy to understand.

Couldn't read it properly, only shown in a small screen on the page, not easy to read.

"Once again it is a bucks consultation that is worded so as to ensure Bucks gets the decision they want. The changes do not address the issues that the current service is not fit for purpose."

If a child/young person has to be in education until they are 18, then a space on school transport must be provided until that age. It should not be a case of "we will get the youngsters on board first & stuff the rest of them". Many families have both parents working and rely on school transport. To remove that service would have a huge impact on those families, that child may end up not fulfilling his potential and if a parent has to take that child to school may perhaps lead to job loss & family reliance on welfare - which would surely end up costing more than the school bus service.

It is in need of a complete review to simplify it. Applying the criteria looks to be so complex that the cost of administration must be unnecessarily high.

It's better than it was previously.

How would this work with Home to Respite journeys?

it says changes in 21-to 22 why can't it be given now

By travelling via coach/ bus rather than encouraging personal travel budget fro each pupil it will free up available budget which can be used more efficiently across Bucks and will help with the potential budget costs that may been seen as a result of the CV19 pandemic. As well as improving

impact to environment and lessen the impact of additional pupils travelling to already congested areas in the mist of rush hour.

I believe children with SEN should have a personal transport budget within 5 miles of their educational setting, to give more transport choice. I think children who have to travel further afield should continue with council contract transport.

The policy is very wordy and the yellow blocks of text make for a confusing read

The allocation of a Personal Transport Budget (section 8) is very much my preferred option. I would think that some parents may find it difficult to transition and so it is important to have an option for those who are already using the legacy approach. But for new entrants to the system and those already in the system by default should move to the Personal Transport Budget. We have used similar to pay for our son's carer and it is an easy to use, easy to administer and very flexible approach.

Please let us know why you ranked your choices in that order (Post-16 SEND transport arrangement and payment options)

I do not believe that the la should charge for sen transport for 16+. Buckinghamshire is lacking in appropriate sen provision and due to this kids are travelling further than they should be required to travel. Many of us would send to local schools but there are no local schools with sen provision but again parents are being hit in the pocket because of the la failures

I wish to make my own plans for transport

Family have enough to deal with dont need may stress sorting transport out to

banded model seems fairest based on distance, and at least then those further away are contributing more, rather than those with shorter distance to travel subsidising those living further away... those nearer could also be the least well off.

More freedom of choice for option 2, but the impetus should be with the council to arrange for the transport.

"Whilst I would like there to be minimal change, I am sad to say that my confidence in how school transport has been managed has been dented considerably.

My choices reflect this and are in my opinion, the ""least bad"" options"

Aids decisions based on personal circumstances

"I believe the option of contributing financially to the school transport would increase the chance of a securing a place for my child on the transport. more children requesting places paid for would surely bring the cost of the transport down."

Where possible bus transport should be offered, instead of expensive one to one taxi service which is used very often.

Because it's easy with the 1 option

I think if parents arrange their own transport it will need less resources and sense of entitlement.

Council organised transport is more likely to be able to take environmental factors into account.

The existing model does not work efficiently - young people are left without transport to new education placements for weeks on end with little transparency. Having a personal budget will allow families to take control and ensure that transport is in place.

"The consultation does not meet the available options for pupils in our area.

The pupils have no other public transport choice. It is the school transport or parents being required to provide their own.

The options do not help the parents or pupils.

Really don't see how the options you have provided can be applied to the area we live in."

Due to my daughter being in the most expensive band I feel we are being financially penalised.

There is nothing suitable closer to home for her. At the end of the day transport cost to the parents should not be what influences where the child goes for their education. That child should be able to attend the most suitable school/college for them and the fact we live 10+ miles away is not our fault yet we are being hit hard in the pocket for it. My fear is SEN children may be squeezed out of education all together on the back of these costs.

Option 2 gives most flexibility for families. Option 3 - it may not be easy/safe for parents to organise own transport so think there should always be an option for council arranged transport.

Provides flexibility for those who would prefer to make own arrangements. Retains access to council run services for those who wish to use them. Best of both worlds. Negative financial impact to those who live closest, however the overall benefits of providing a funded choice offsets the minimal increase in costs for those who living closer to their school.

As student approach adulthood it's good for them to begin to have choices over which they are in control

I think it is important to still have the council run option for students who don't wish to or aren't mature enough to make their own personal transport choices. I would be against only have a personal budget as an option for older students.

"All 3 are extremely unfair when the County fails to provide SEN provision within reasonable travelling distances. If educational settings for SEN were provided for inside the county then transport costs would reduce significantly!"

It is important to recognise that just transporting a SEND child to their educational setting is not the only factor - childcare and transporting other SEND/non-SEND children can make using prescribed transport prohibitive. Giving families the flexibility to arrange their own pick-up and drop-off times is immensely important.

To give parents more choice, in my experience council use a few local taxi companies. De regulating these companies will mean that they are more accountable and are competing for the work. Council approved transport providers.... Set minimum standards and quality of transport. And set charges.... Personal budgets are open to abuse.. Plus will the transport be suitable?

They are all dreadful. If a child must be in Education or Training until 18, why should a SEND student suddenly have to pay to get to it? Parents often can't work due to care and this is another financial pressure. Fixed by mileage seems fairest, although a PTB might just pay for taxis.

"Many families will not be capable of arranging the transport. The process needs to be as simple as possible for them, hence council arranged. Some families may not use the Personal Budget wisely and it may be absorbed into other costs although that is not the purpose of it."

None solve the injustices.

Because option 2 gives flexibility for personal choice. Also if we are charged equally it would be more fair

Gives more flexibility.

"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. I would not trust the Council to agree to an adequate amount if proposing Personal Transport Budgets. If you are ""discounting"" travel charges to parents in Option 1, you are not going to give people the full amount, which would be greater, to cover sorting personal transport out are you!"

Gives students best choice

"We should not be penalising rural student, who often have to travel longer distances to schools and colleges. Also, not every student is able to attend their local school for various reasons. A distance-based model would seem unfair considering the large geographic covered by Buckinghamshire Council. Secondly, providing a choice seems the fairest option to parents and the wider community."

I can see that for some families it might be good to have the option of arranging their own transport using a personal transport budget. However for some families that is totally impractical. How on earth do we find taxi providers that are safe? approved? For a child who has just turned 16 there is too much risk of the transport arrangements all falling apart and therefore non-attendance at school/college.

It would be difficult for us to do the journeys for our child each day therefore council transport is preferable. However option 1 is unfair as the school is the nearest school she can attend but we have to pay per mile. I feel that is discrimination to the child - they have no other option but to attend that setting. It is not our fault the school isn't closer to us.

My son's travel is free for 2020/2021. When it actually happens.

"As a parent of 3 and working life is hard enough. Don't have the time to sort taxi out myself as my time is taking up with meetings about my son and work"

we are not asking for transport but milage money we use our own car so we do not pay any fee

Feel that all pupils should be walking, cycling or travelling via public transport.

"I do not agree with the banding. Bucks are very poor on Sen schools meaning many children have to travel further due to the lack of appropriate schools provided by Bucks. Parents should not be disadvantaged by this as the LA will be forcing more parents to become sole carers for their children with special educational needs who are no longer able to work due to the failure of the la to provide adequate services. An EHCP should entitle children to free transport whilst in education regardless of age."

"With regard to pupils with SEND / EHCP parents should be able to Choose according to their particular situation - whether parents work and can transport their child, affordability and/or whether the child is able to travel independently"

Special needs individual- just because an education setting is the closest doesn't mean that it is suitable for the individuals concerned.

In a rural context I see it as important that those less financially stable should not be penalised by the removal of option 1. Clearly there are benefits to families to be able to use either of the other options but my concern is that a system that may mean that the numbers requiring option 1 are reduced will, in the fullness of time, result in the removal of option 1.

Choice is always better

As above children who have to travel 5 miles should be given a personal budget to control the form of transport they choose and Council contracts being the default for children travelling over 5 miles.

The current system seems the most appropriate

More choice the better.

All have a potential problem for some families, option 2 has some flexibility

I feel this is the best option as there is more flexibility

Preference is for existing method (annual fee) as this is the most straightforward

We have directly experienced significant issues with the Option 1 approach and in fact it is the principal reason I have pursued a stage 1 and stage 2 complaint. Removing the council from the "transport commissioning" aspect of the provision is the best way to ensure that the right level of provision is put in place in a timely manner. The current system has been demonstrated not to provide a timely solution, with students, parents and teachers all experiencing disruption at start of term. Personal Independence Payments work exceptionally well as regards supporting parents with

SEND children and the system proposed has clear similarities. It is a step forward to an obvious end goal which should be a "single SEND person support budget" (that is, combine all support payments into one budget, administered using a prepay card).

Fairness

Do you have any further comments on Personal Transport Budgets?

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

Without knowing further detail etc no, also not applicable to the majority of families.

"Re question 8 the only other choices we have are

- parents to drive pupils to & from school
- pupils to travel into Aylesbury and then out to Wing. This would mean leaving the villages at about 7am. The service from the villages to Aylesbury are not conducive to school hours
- how can you expect an honest answer to a question when there is no choice

Re question 9

- what can the personal budget be spent on other than the school bus currently provided which already prioritizes out of catchment pupils over inside catchment pupils?"

Questions 8 & 9 don't cover option variables. E.g. I currently use council arranged transport, however would consider arranging own transport if my working location/pattern changed.

"No parent wishes to send their SEN child to a school that is further away than necessary. It is wrong to penalise parents because the LA fails to provide adequate provision ! If anything, parents should be expected to pay for the costs of a 5-8 mile journey each way, as this is the typical distance a non SEN student would travel."

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

They need to be realistic and fair. Not every child can take a bus.

I think the whole scheme is a disgrace. Charging SEN students when schools have to be selected based on the students' needs, not on parental preference. And to have been charging SEN parents while you have not charged Mainstream students is an even greater disgrace.

A tap and pay system could be considered if parents preferred more flexibility and personal budgeting.

"It is an onerous task to arrange transport from a rural location, and if my child has just turned 16 I don't think it appropriate that it should be done on this basis. My other child who attends school will be able to use his school bus until he is 18, which is a safe way of getting to school.

Please, you must have the option of the council organising transport for vulnerable people between 16-25, school/college is a really important constant in their lives and it is stressful enough thinking about the travel without having to rely on ""childminders"" or a friend (uh, from where??) to take to school. This is a total non-starter for us as a family."

Very disorganised department

Our children need to be in school they don't have much else to do in life

our daughter is taken by us to and from all the tutors with her bespoke education we want milage money not have transport

As above think that the money could be better spent across Bucks as a whole. The pupils in most cases apart from those on SEND are capable of walking, cycling or travelling via public transport(coach, bus and trains). They are of an age where responsibility of education and making sure that they manage time to get adequate rest and rise early to make that commitment should be part of their remit. This will also prepare them for university or work opportunities in the future.

However I cannot see how this would be cost effective. Surely students travelling together to one location is better value than individuals travelling separately in different vehicles. This will also have an impact on the environment. Would it not be better to have a designated person to organise the transport to each individual location and filling bums on seats ?

I do not fully understand from this document the difference between a personal transport budget and our current situation - claiming mileage reimbursement . My child has an ehcp and turns 16yrs in January.

Be mindful with the form of transport, public transport ie buses in many cases are not viable for children with SEN particularly autism.

As stated earlier this is a farce. My son is still waiting 3 months later for the promised transport to materialise. Very poor service

I am very pleased to see this. I do not know if this is a response to the complaint I have made, but this appears to address that complaint. Had this been known to me before I submitted my complaint, I think it would have made for a much easier life for me and for the people handling the complaint. I believe this has the makings of a system which will allow us to move on from current problems and I look forward to its implementation.

Do you have any other comments about the information provided on assistance for students with SEND?

make it easier for parents and carers of students with SEND to arrange transport and go through the exceptions panel

"The information provided is adequate, however the reality of the assistance and service provided is drastically at odds with your policy, in my opinion. My personal experience is that I struggled to get any sort of assistance with transport for my son when his lower limb function was impaired as a result of spinal surgery and chemotherapy for cancer. He was 11 at the time."

It does not include Mental health

Perhaps only transport should be provided if the child is at a special school - or say over 20 hours of 121 support.

For children with autism and anxiety, giving them this information is very stressful when all they want to do is continue to learn and not have anything changed

"A student with SEND and their parents should not be penalised due to the student taking longer to study or because their needs can't be met by provisions a ridiculous distance away. If SEND children and students were provided with the right levels of support (incl. transport) then they would have a much better chance of finding work and becoming independent as adults"

It seems ludicrous that age plays a part in Education and Training for children with SEND as they make take national qualifications at a later stage than mainstream.

"Yes, the bursary application process assumes there is a sizeable discretionary bursary available at the school. This is not the case, in some schools the budget is so small it will barely cover the cost for one student. The vulnerable bursary is not available to many post 16 students as they don't meet the criteria."

I would like that if a school is named on an EHCP that transport be provided free if that school is not the nearest school to the home address, even if the child does not have a physical disability (but has a hidden disability).

Make them clearer please. For instance are there circumstances a send child is expected to walk to school within a certain limit.

It is unfair that these students have to pay more for their travel as the education setting is usually the ones that is closest to them. If the council provided more accessible education in their local area they would not need to travel so far.

i just repeat my self we need milage money we were granted this in 2010 by bucks

It is sadly misleading

Students with SEND have enough issues to deal with. The most important issue for these students is to go to the most suitable setting rather than the nearest setting.

I have two children on SEND only one qualifies for transport assistance which complicates the matter

Information is inaccurate as promised services are not delivered

My one concern is regarding "most local provision". This runs counter to the actual delivery of SEND education and the progression through facilities which a student will make in practice. Whilst the council's system on a standalone basis may identify MK College as the nearest facility, my son's education experience has been in the Aylesbury school system and his development and transition has been on the basis of attending Aylesbury College. There needs to be an injection of reality alongside theory. With SEND students, facilities have to be appropriate and the input of teachers, support workers and parents have to carry weight.

Do you have any other comments about the information provided on travel assistance for 19 year olds with SEND?

"Stop making life harder for family children need to be doing something
Some children can never work so don't make it hard for parents children need to be in school"

Think this will make students more likely to take a year out, as most students once finished A-levels or similar will be 18 still when moving onto their next course.

This should be publicised more so that more people can use this to access education.

When will I get my transport for my son's travel to and from college??

like i said still waiting for our milage money from bucks that we were granted in 2010 till now

All is sadly misleading. Sen families have enough struggles without having to jump through the hoops the LA places in the way.

This has all been made hard to understand. Needs to be clear instructions. It was like that previously.

I believe all SEN children and post 19 transport should be free as many SEN children are catching up with lack of education.

Do you have any other comments about the information provided on how outstanding payments will be managed?

For some reason the LA appears to think that parents have monies sat around and available.

The school is not kept informed of the result of the Transport Exceptions panel. Parents assume that the school and council are one body.

Many people are under enormous financial pressure right now, please provide extra consideration and compassion.

My son's travel will be free

we have never had any milage money from bucks that we are granted back 2010 till now when are we getting the back payment

What about outstanding payments from the LA to parents ? What commitment on payment terms with the La make

The council website regarding SEN transport is not very thorough.

Do you have any other feedback that you would like to share with us about the proposed Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement?

16+ sen transport should be free

make the guidance more transparent about PTBs

Religious schools should not be included as a child's closest school

Don't put pressure on parents about the cost of any transport children need to be in school it should not cost

Non-selective schools are those that don't select on academic (11+) or faith. Free transport should be offered for the nearest, truly non-selective school

"Keep as many mainstream children as possible on contracted coaches, these are the safest way of transporting mainstream children to school above all other options.

Keep as many SEND children as possible in dedicated taxis to suit their individual needs. This can then be a tailored service to suit our most vulnerable children's needs be it physical or mental issues."

"Make transport affordable, at nearly £800 for a bus pass (assuming a space is available normally it isn't) school buses are not affordable. Parents are all driving to school causing congestion around schools and pollution. With a child who has always taken the school bus now turned 16 and in six form, no offer of bus place or details about this have been available. If you phone the transport to school people there is no answer on the phones, no replies to emails very difficult to get through to people.

My child attends our nearest school 3 miles away which would cost almost £800 to take to school, attending six form she only attends for lessons. Therefore, it's not affordable and flexible enough. Herts offer their 11-19 year olds a subsidised travel card, giving the students the flexibility and making it more affordable. That makes sense rather than having all the parents from Pitstone and other villages drive to Tring School, there is along stream of vehicles travelling and the environmental impact is great too.

At the moment the buses are empty which can't be cost effective to run, why not offer cheaper bus passes and fill the buses?"

How are you going to effectively ensure there is good quality and enough transport available for pupils in years 12 & 13 who have no other choice - ie no public transport options available?

Simplifying your policy documents is great. My child has the special needs - not me - but I have found the process a minefield. More information on how the Appeals process works would be good. Also how to have a complaint addressed and actually dealt with will be good. Up to date contact details that are responded to and acted on would be useful too.

Giving families/young people choice is part of the independence young people need.

No, other than reiterating that post 16 SEND students should not be charged.

Existing system of booking is not fit for purpose, private companies seem far more capable of running the system than the council, but you as gatekeepers for the information about the system fail to present route choices and information in a manner free from contradictions, gaps, etc.

There is no differentiation to nearest suitable school and grammar and non grammar schools. The nearest suitable school has to be one you are within catchment for. As an example where I live my child will qualify for free transport to Lord Williams - however we are outside of the catchment area and no chance of actually taking up that free transport. The catchment school is Risborough but that is much further and doesn't qualify as free? Also my child qualified for the 11+ and there was no consideration for this when looking at suitable school to offer free transport to

"I think the whole scheme is a disgrace. Charging SEN students when schools have to be selected based on the students' needs, not on parental preference. And to have been charging SEN parents while you have not charged Mainstream students is an even greater disgrace.

I know you will say that, because of Covid charges are not in place this academic year but I am sure you will be back and charging more next year. As it all evolves around finances and the Council trying to recoup some of the money, I don't believe it matters what parents feed back to you - as we learnt last time, all responses were ignored and you went ahead with what you wanted regardless!!"

"Thank you to everyone involved for getting our young people to where they need to be. Our drivers do a lot more than just drive, from checking on kids to providing physical assistance. We should acknowledge that more than we do."

Just please think about how difficult it is at the best of times to get people with SEND to school/college. The idea of having to arrange transport ourselves fills me with horror. I can see that it might suit some families, but my husband and I both work, we live in a rural location, there are no local taxi firms, etc. Option 3 would be unbelievably stressful for all of us to organise and manage.

"I think your department has given me false pretences as my son was chosen to receive transport to and from his college. This has never happened and was due to start on September 7th 2000. I have totally rearranged my work schedule just so that my son gets to college and back everyday.

I was also offered travel allowance to take my son to and from college, then to be told I could not claim as I was collecting him from my place of work.

Absolutely disgusting."

I would like to raise my concern regarding access to Post-16 education from rural areas with no public transportation and where there are limited spaces available on Council contracted buses. In some areas of Bucks, for example the Ivinghoe area, there is no public transport to main post-16 education establishments. Parents as having to make major adjustments to their working day to drive their children in to their places of study. I urge the Council to work with schools and colleges to explore what travel arrangements can be provided to assist post-16 students accessing their places of study.

"there are no fees or our family to pay all we want is the milage money granted to us for 2010 to 2012

then 2013 to 2014

then 2015 till now

all the back payments for all the milage money that we are told we were granted by bucks"

As stated should use budgets to facilitate joint travel via coach, bus or train. Where possible encourage green options via walking and cycling. Schools do not provide onsite parking for students and if own transport option provided by council then they will opt for this option as it's convenient to them. Won't help with green issues, environment, schools can't provide parking on site and charges for electronic cars .

"The change to policy was to save money. This hasn't happened and because you have had site of ombudsman cases you changed the wording , keeping the changes you had made and therefore has now completely confused everyone.

Free transport should be provided for the normal rules. Should be to catchment schools. This whole issue has now been confused. You should have school admissions and transport policy running alongside each other."

To be mindful of individual circumstances and provide person centred transport.

"I would like to feel that their could be continued communication as this age is a very demanding change for many leaving school settings. It's often a big learning curve and it's hard to often make these decisions without some trialling.

Transport can be very stressful so the average person so I feel it's very often very under estimated how problematic this can be for a person with additional needs. I personally have been very disappointed with the very black and white approach that I have experienced."