



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of services and in wider society.

The duty requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people

Public bodies demonstrate this due regard in different ways, including producing robust equality impact assessments when considering changes to policies and services.

An EqIA enables us to check the potential impacts on residents and employees of our policies, services and projects. It's an opportunity to challenge how we currently do things.

Carrying out an EqIA should not create extra work; it should be part of your normal service planning process. Most of the information required should already be available to you through other work already undertaken e.g. service user monitoring, analysis of complaints and national research.

The purpose of an EqIA is to *take account* of equality as plans develop, to promote and assist the consideration of equalities issues arising in plans and proposals and to ensure that where possible adverse or disproportionate impacts are minimised and positive impacts are maximised. As such where possible an EqIA should be started at the outset of a project/proposal and continually be developed and reviewed until a final proposal is adopted. An EqIA should be used to ensure decision makers have all the information they need regarding potential impacts to ensure they have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making judgements.

Carrying out EqIAs should be an integral part of policy or service development/change and larger projects may need more than one EqIA if different areas are impacted by the change.

Any project that requires consultation will automatically require an EqIA.

All approved and signed EqIAs are recorded in a central register. Please email your completed draft EqIA to equalities@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Previous EqIAs can be made available for information upon request. For any questions or if you require support in completing your EqIA please contact Maria Damigos and Natalie Donhou Morley directly.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Part A (Initial assessment) - Section 1 - Background

Proposal/Brief Title: School Bus Ticket Charges – Spare Seats Scheme

OneDrive link to report/policy: Key Decision (Leader) report – School Transport Policy consultation findings and recommendations April 2023

Related policies: [Home to School Transport Policy \(0-25 years old\)](#)

Date: January 2023 (post-consultation)

Type of strategy, policy, project or service: Discretionary

Please tick one of the following:

- Existing
- New or proposed
- Changing, update or revision
- Other (please explain)

This assessment was created by:

Name: Cheryl Platts

Job Title: Transport Policy & Improvement Manager

Email address: Cheryl.platts@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal below:

The Client Transport Team, within Transport Services, run school buses for children who are [eligible for free school transport](#) under national and local home to school transport policy. There may be a small number of seats on some routes that are spare, which we sell via our [Spare Seats scheme](#). These pupils are not eligible for free school transport, usually because they have chosen schools that are not their nearest suitable school e.g., choosing a grammar school over a nearer all-ability school.

The current school bus ticket charging structure for these spare seats is complex and difficult to understand and administer. There are 13 different price points and charges are currently based on age, distance and whether the customer boards within or outside of Buckinghamshire. It is therefore proposed to simplify the school bus ticket charges for the Spare Seat scheme to improve the customer experience.

Three proposed options for a revised Spare Seat scheme charging structure were agreed for public consultation over 6.5 weeks (19 October – 4 December 2022).



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Option 1: Distance banding (small increments between bands)

Option 2: Distance banding (medium increments between bands)

Option 3: Flat fee (regardless of distance)

All Spare Seat scheme charging options were presented on a neutral basis i.e. no one option was preferred over any other; and the decision would be taken based on the outcome of the public consultation.

What outcomes do we want to achieve?

- Make our school bus ticket (Spare Seat) charging easier for customers to understand and for staff to administer
- Remove the current difference in price based on age (i.e. students of sixth-form age "Post-16" may be charged a higher price than pre-16s, even if on the same bus, going to the same school. However, there is no statutory requirement to provide mainstream transport for young people over statutory school age (5 to 16 years)).

Does this proposal plan to withdraw a service, activity or presence? No

Please explain your answer:

The [Spare Seat scheme](#) will continue to operate. We are proposing to simplify the pricing approach used.

Does this proposal plan to reduce a service, activity or presence? No

Please explain your answer:

As above, we are proposing to simplify the Spare Seat scheme pricing approach.

Does this proposal plan to introduce, review or change a policy, strategy or procedure? Yes

Please explain your answer:

The Council is responsible for providing free school transport to eligible students; however the Spare Seat scheme is a discretionary scheme allowing parents/carers who do not qualify for transport assistance to apply and pay for a seat. We are not required to offer these spare seats. The proposals to change the charging approach do not require a change to Policy but would require some changes to internal procedures (e.g. calculation of fees payable, system updates, billing documentation, etc.)

Does this proposal affect service users and/or customers, or the wider community? Yes

Please explain your answer:

We currently offer Spare Seats on school buses to 48 schools in Buckinghamshire (including a small number of out of county schools i.e. Bucks equivalent schools). Changes to the charging would impact all existing and new Spare Seat scheme (i.e. paying) customers. As at 31 January 2023 there were 431 Spare Seats passengers. The Spare Seats application



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

window opens thrice a year in July, November and February, so these numbers are likely to fluctuate.

Does this proposal affect employees? No

Please explain your answer:

We have offered the Spare Seats scheme for many years and a charge has always applied; this is service BAU. These proposals would affect the charges that apply; however the Spare Seats scheme would continue.

Will employees require training to deliver this proposal? Yes

Please explain your answer:

There will be training for employees to ensure that they are aware of any changes to Spare Seats charging agreed by the Leader following the review of the consultation findings and staff will need to be trained on how to apply these.

Has any engagement /consultation been carried out, or is planned in the future? Yes

Please explain your answer: A public consultation ran from 19 October to 4 December.

The current (2022-23 academic year) Spare Seats prices are as follows:

Spare Seat 2022/23 Transport Fares (£)	Under 4 miles (Band 1)	4 - 4.99 miles (Band 2)	5 - 6.99 miles (Band 3)	7 - 9.99 miles (Band 4)	10 miles or more (Band 5)	Any distance
In County Resident fares						
Post-16	£783	£914	£1,046	£1,178	£1,311	
Pre-16						£783
Out of County Resident (boarding outside Bucks) fares						
Post-16						£1,709
Pre-16						£1,443
Out of County Resident (boarding within Bucks) fares						
Pre-16 / Post-16	£783	£914	£1,046	£1,178	£1,311	

If the Spare Seats charging structure stayed the same for the academic year starting in September 2023, the Spare Seats charges for 2023-24 would be:



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Spare Seat 2023/24 Transport Fares (£) (A 3% sub-inflationary uplift has been applied to 2022-23 prices)	Under 4 miles	4 - 4.99 miles	5 - 6.99 miles	7 - 9.99 miles	10 miles or more	Any distance
	(Band 1)	(Band 2)	(Band 3)	(Band 4)	(Band 5)	

In County Resident fares

Post-16	£806	£941	£1,077	£1,213	£1,350	
Pre-16						£806

Out of County Resident (boarding outside Bucks) fares

Post-16						£1,760
Pre-16						£1,486

Out of County Resident (boarding within Bucks) fares

Pre-16 / Post-16	£806	£941	£1,077	£1,213	£1,350	
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A public consultation ran from 19 October to 4 December. We consulted on three proposals for changes to School Bus Ticket Charges (Spare Seats scheme):

1. Three distance bands plus a non-Buckinghamshire resident band (small difference between bands)

Customer	Distance	Proposed charge for 2023 -24
Buckinghamshire Council resident	0 to 3.99 miles	£843
	4 to 6.99 miles	£865
	7 miles or more	£886
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	Any distance	£1,200

2. Three distance bands plus a non-Buckinghamshire resident band - (medium difference between bands)

Customer	Distance	Proposed charge for 2023-24
Buckinghamshire Council resident	0 to 3.99 miles	£806
	4 to 6.99 miles	£859
	7 miles or more	£912
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	Any distance	£1,200



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

3. One flat rate for Buckinghamshire residents plus a different rate for non-Buckinghamshire residents –

Customer	Proposed charge for 2023 to 2024
Buckinghamshire Council resident	£868
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	£1,200

Under all pricing options:

- Prices were modelled to achieve a net 0% average increase for Bucks school bus ticket customers (based on 2022/23 fee rates and 2021/22 passenger numbers).
- Removal of age as a determining factor for charges – no price increase for parents/carers once their child reaches sixth-form age.
- Were modelled to be financially neutral i.e. protecting existing income levels but not generating additional income.
- Non-Buckinghamshire Council area residents will pay a higher fee of £1,200 p.a. under all options.

It is important to note that not all existing customers will need/want to renew their child's bus ticket. There is an annual churn of approx. 30%.

No other changes were proposed to the Spare Seat Scheme offer, application process or prioritisation policy.

After the consultation closed, all comments received were reviewed by senior officers and consultation responses analysed. In summary the 'flat fee' option was the most popular option because it was considered the simplest to understand, fairest as parents cannot always choose which school their child will go to, and was the most popular amongst respondents who lived 7+ miles from their child's educational setting.

Based on the consultation responses, the recommended option for adoption is **Option 3: Flat fee**. If this is recommendation is amended or not agreed, this EqIA will be revisited.

Section 2 - Impacts

Please highlight potential impacts (including unintended impacts or consequences) for each protected characteristic*/equality groups below. Where there are negative or positive impacts please give more details of the impact. Where the impacts are unclear please explain why.

Age*

Positive

Negative

Unclear

None

Details: The current Spare Seats scheme charging structure has 13 different pay points. There is a mixture of pricing approaches i.e. distance-banded fee for Post-16 students



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

and those who board our Council-run school buses out of county, and a flat-rate fee for Pre-16 students. This mixture of approaches makes the charging schedule difficult to understand, complex to administer and there is no clear rationale for why students of sixth form age (i.e. older than statutory school age) should pay more than students who are pre-16.

Under all proposals the current post-16 pricing cliff edge will be removed, supporting the Council’s duty to facilitate attendance of persons of sixth form age at educational institutions (Education Act 1996, s.509AA). Under the proposals most post-16s will pay less..

Following consultation, the recommended option for adoption is **Option 3: Flat fee**. Under this option, the financial modelling undertaken in September 2022 to inform the consultation showed that 20% of Buckinghamshire customers will pay less than they do currently (post-16), with 80% paying more in 2023/24. To put this change into context:

- For those students where an increase in payment is required in 2023/24, the maximum increase applicable is £62 p.a. (7.7% or £5.17 per month).
- Most post-16 students will pay less, with a maximum reduction in fees for Buckinghamshire customers of £482 p.a. (35.7% saving).

The charging approaches proposed are to provide equity of pricing regardless of age.

Disability*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details: None. Students of statutory school age with an Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP) who are eligible for home to school transport assistance on the grounds of their SEND receive free transport. This is a statutory duty.

Pregnancy & maternity*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details:

Race & Ethnicity*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details: These proposals will simplify the Spare Seats charging structure for all existing or potential customers regardless of race/ethnicity.

Marriage & Civil Partnership*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Details:

Religion & Belief*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details: None on the basis of religion of Spare Seats customer.

National legislation has given extended rights to pupils from low income families. This is set out in the Council's Home to School Transport Policy at section 3.5 as follows:

"Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend a school between 2 miles and 15 miles away from home will be entitled to Council funded home to school transport if their parents/carers have expressed a wish for them to be educated at that particular school based on the parents/carer's religion or belief and, having regard to that wish, there is no nearer suitable school. This applies to parents/carers with a particular religious or philosophical belief, including those with a lack of religion or lack of belief."

Sex*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details: Will impact on all students that choose to use the spare seat scheme regardless of sex

Sexual Orientation*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details:

Gender Reassignment*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details:

Gender identity

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details:

Carers

Positive	Negative	Unclear	<u>None</u>
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Details:



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Rural isolation

Positive Negative Unclear None

Details: There are 4 categories of students of statutory school age living in Buckinghamshire and attending their nearest suitable school who are eligible for free travel assistance:

1. children who live beyond the statutory walking distance
2. children from low income families (where extended rights apply)
3. children whose walking route to school is unsafe
4. children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), a disability or a mobility difficulty

Children who live in rural areas are highly likely to qualify for free school transport to their nearest suitable school on the grounds of exceeding the statutory walking distance and/or their walking route to school being unsafe.

There may be an increase for some families which will not be clear until applications are received, but there will not be an increase in costs for all e.g. a young person aged 17 travelling over 10 miles could save up to £482 p.a. If a child is from a low income family, they could qualify under criteria 2. (Children from low income families) for transport assistance.

Single parent families

Positive Negative Unclear None

Details: None purely on the basis of being in a single parent family. Children from low income single parent families may qualify for free school transport as detailed above. Increased costs may impact this group, however group may also benefit from reduced prices.

Poverty (social & economic deprivation)

Positive Negative Unclear None

Details: Increased costs may impact on this group, although children from low-income families are likely to be eligible for free transport. Those who do buy a spare seat may also benefit from reduced prices.

Military families / veterans

Positive Negative Unclear None

Details:



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Template reviewed Nov 2021

Section 3 – Is a full assessment required?

If you have answered yes to any of the initial assessment questions in section 1 of this EqIA, or have indicated a negative or unclear impact in section 2, it is likely you will need to complete part B of the EqIA form. Should you need guidance as to whether a full EqIA is needed at this time please contact Maria Damigos or Natalie Donhou Morley before continuing.

Following completion of part A, is part B completion required?

- Yes
- Not required at this time
- No

Explain your answer:

The Spare Seat charging approaches proposed are to provide equity of pricing regardless of age. The potential impact on new and existing Spare Seat customers will be based on individual circumstances; some customers may pay more and others may pay less under the recommended option: flat fee.

Prices for all three options were modelled to achieve a net 0% average increase for Bucks school bus ticket customers (based on 22/23 fee rates & 21/22 passenger numbers which is the latest available data).

The charging approaches proposed were provide equity of pricing regardless of age. These proposals went to public consultation from 19 October to 4 December. The initial assessment and the requirement of a full EqIA has been reviewed following the consultation period.

Have you completed an DPIA for this project/change? No

(As you are completing an EqIA, you may also require a DPIA - for more information please contact dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

Section 4 – Sign off (Only complete when NOT completing Part B)

Officer completing this assessment: Cheryl Platts

Date: 25/08/2022, revised 13/10/2022. Post-consultation revision 31/01/2023

Equality advice sought from: Natalie Donhou-Morley Date: 14/10/2022 Post-consultation revision approved 08/02/2023

Service Director sign off: Lindsey Vallis Date: 17/10/2022 Post-consultation revision approved 09/02/2023

Next review Date: Pre-key decision – March 2023

If required please complete part B (full assessment) – Not required