

Mainstream Education Transport Consultation

Outcomes

A) 512 completed response forms were received online, by email and in the post.

The summary of these responses is:

Q1 Do you think in the current financial climate the LA should provide transport in excess of the statutory minimum?

444 said Yes and 68 said No. Of those who said Yes 430 (97%) are parents and 279 (63%) in receipt of free transport. Of those who said No 61 (90%) are parents and 28 (41%) in receipt of free transport.

Q2 If no, who should fund this extra provision? 207 answered (but only 68 said No) as follows:

Parents	47
Schools	9
Council Taxpayers	139
Schools & Taxpayers	2
Parents & Taxpayers	7
Parents & Taxpayers & Schools	3

Q3 Please give us your views on the proposals. The main issues for those against the proposals are:

- The proposed cost of paying for a seat – £660 per annum – much too expensive;
- Families with more than one child using this system will have to pay a significant amount each year i.e. £1,220 or £1,980 or £2,640;
- An additional “Tax” that the council taxpayers of Herefordshire will have to pay;
- Whilst wealthy families will be able to afford the cost the less well off, including the “pressed” middle income families will not;
- What’s the point of a school catchment system for admissions with no linkage to school transport entitlement;
- A “backdoor” approach to changing school catchment areas;
- Cross-border travel to the nearest school will increase costs and will mean Herefordshire schools will lose funding and may have to close;
- Families on the Welsh border do not want to send their children to Welsh speaking schools;
- The potential disruption to KS4 pupils will be significant;
- Friendship groups will be broken up;
- Pupil confidence will be impacted upon;
- Siblings could end up at different schools;
- The nearest school is not as good as the catchment school i.e. Ofsted grading;
- Rural families already have less “choice” than urban families; these proposals will widen the gap.

Those in favour of the proposals cited matching responsibility with choice and the current financial climate as the reasons for their support.

- Q4 If the proposals are implemented will they affect you and your family, your school or your organisation? 416 (80%) said Yes and 101 (20%) said No. If Yes, please let us know how:
- The financial cost of paying for school transport was the main issue if children didn't change school along with the impact upon their children's education if they did change school;
 - The proposals take the element of "choice" away from less wealthy families;
 - If schools lose funding through the loss of pupils they will become less successful and may have to close;
 - Why can't all parents pay something (i.e. much less than £660 per annum) towards school transport i.e. no-one gets it free.
- Q5 Please give us your views about the timing of introducing the revised policy, if it is agreed. These ranged from "never" to "September 2014 at the earliest" and also the suggestion that the implementation should be phased so that existing pupils, particularly KS4 are not affected.

Analysis of respondents:

The majority of the respondents are Herefordshire citizens (96%).

64% have a child/children who currently receive free transport to school.

69% of respondents have a child or children who will be affected by the proposals.

20% of respondents are members of staff or governors of schools.

- B) Two separate petitions against the proposals were received, one from parents, members of staff, etc from the John Masefield "area" affected by the proposals – 295 petitioners (with significant "duplicates" and "anonymous" entries) and the other petition from parents, members of staff, etc from the Brimfield, Little Hereford & Orleton area affected by the proposals – 174 petitioners.
- C) Individual responses against the proposals were received from 4 schools: Pembridge, Cradley, John Masefield and the Ledbury "cluster".
NB: Prior to the consultation process commencing a number of other schools submitted comments against the proposals namely Weobley High, Fairfield and Lady Hawkins.
- D) Responses against the proposals were received from five Parish councils: Titley (re Pembridge Primary), Credenhill (re Weobley High), Aymestrey (re Wigmore High), Wigmore (re Wigmore High) and Whitchurch & Ganarew (re John Kyrle).
- E) 27 hand written letters against the proposal received from year 6 pupils at St Mary's, Credenhill Primary School.
- F) In addition we have received confirmation from four out of five adjoining Local Authorities (Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire) that they will not allow changes to parental preferences in the current Admissions Transfer Round (year 7 from September 2014) received after the official closing date of 31st October 2013 as a result of Herefordshire changing their transport policy with effect from September 2014.
- G) A response from Worcestershire LA confirming our proposals are as per their own back in 2011.

Proposal options:

1. Maintain status quo – find savings from somewhere else.
2. Implement proposed change in entitlement plus:
 - a. Only provide transport for entitled pupils;
 - b. Continue to provide transport for non-entitled pupils by way of the Vacant Seat Payment Scheme (VSPS) at £660 per annum;
 - c. As per b. except contribution set at a lower amount than £660 per annum;
 - d. As per c. plus further reductions in contribution for siblings using VSPS.
3. Implement proposals from:
 - a. September 2014 for all pupils;
 - b. September 2014 for all KS1, 2 & 3 pupils;
 - c. September 2014 for all new entrants at schools i.e. maintain status quo for all those currently in receipt of free school transport because they are attending their catchment school, even if it is not their nearest;
 - d. Some other date.
4. Allow parents to “choose” the nearest Herefordshire school rather than the nearest out of county school and still receive free transport (the Durham County Council model).

Alternative considerations:

1. Encourage Community transport providers to extend their provision to include school transport and out of hours transport (evenings and weekends) by using funding from the home to school transport budget (free for entitled pupils), parents (non-entitled pupils paying a contribution/fare), parish council precepts, schools (funding and/or use of school minibuses at no cost) and the LA funding for Community Transport.