

Proposed reductions to home to school/college transport provision

Final Report on responses to the public consultation
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PROPOSED CHANGES TO HOME-TO-SCHOOL/COLLEGE TRANSPORT

Background

The City council currently spends a total of £4.5 million per year on home to school/college transport.

Following approval of budget proposals for 2012/13 and 2013/14 the council is committed to make reductions in *discretionary* home to school/college travel provision to achieve savings of £255,000 in 2013/14 and £343,000 in subsequent years.

Consultation

Between 19th November 2012 and 14th January 2013, the council invited the public to submit their views on the council's proposals for achieving agreed savings to the home to school/college travel budget.

The proposals cover reductions in a number of areas which, if approved, will take effect from September 2013:

- Discretionary Transport assistance for pupils who attend voluntary aided schools
- Discretionary Post 16 transport arrangements
- Discretionary Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements

In anticipation of continued budget pressures, the consultation also sought views on the possible removal of all discretionary provision in future years.

The consultation employed a survey method. Information about the proposed changes was made available online via the council's consultation hub and public feedback was gathered via a questionnaire. Responses could be submitted online or via freepost.

Analysis of responses to the consultation

This report provides a summary of the response to the consultation. This includes information about:

- Who responded
- The answers to questions about the proposals and possible removal of all discretionary transport in the event of continued constraints on public expenditure
- The comments made and issues highlighted

FINDINGS

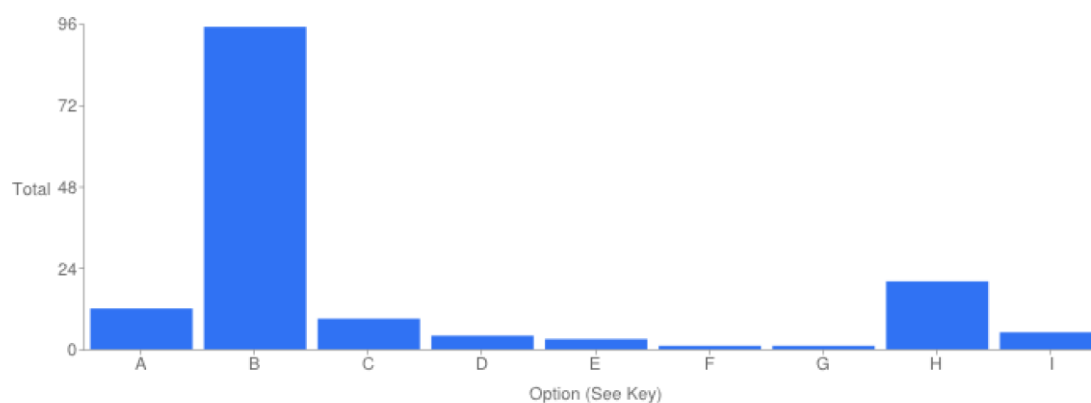
This section of the report summarises the findings from the consultation

Online survey respondents

In total, there were 135 responses.

Q. In what capacity are you responding?

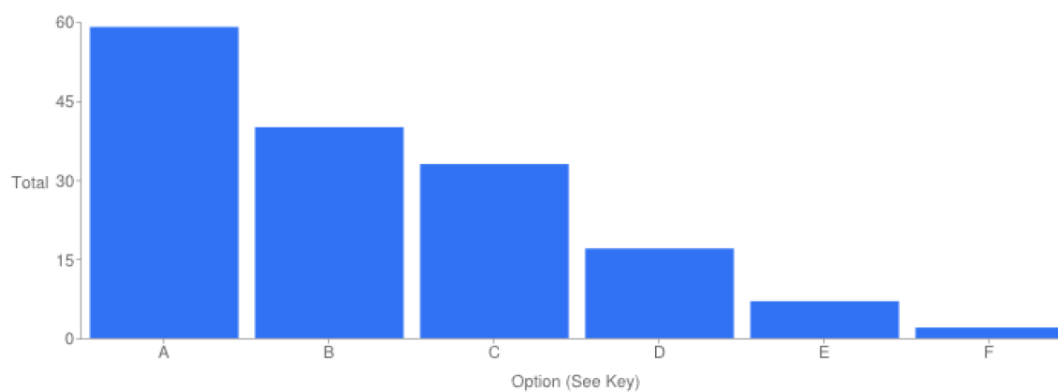
There were responses from a range of respondents, including a large proportion of parents and carers



Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Young person	12	8.889%
B	Parent/carer	95	70.37%
C	Governor	9	6.667%
D	School staff	4	2.963%
E	Local representative group	3	2.222%
F	Faith organisation	1	0.7407%
G	Elected representative	1	0.7407%
H	Other (please specify below)	20	14.81%
I	Not Answered	5	3.704%

Q. Which area of the consultation affects you most?

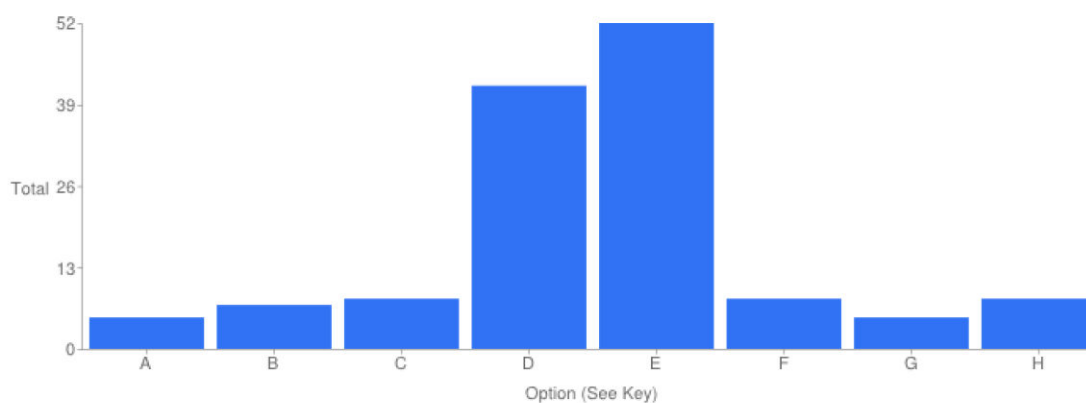
Most respondents described themselves as being affected by the changes, with an equal impact across the 3 main options.



Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Voluntary Aided Transport	59	43.70%
B	Post 16 Transport	40	29.63%
C	Post 16 SEN Transport	33	24.44%
D	None	17	12.59%
E	Prefer not to say	7	5.185%
F	Not Answered	2	1.481%

Q. What is your age?

Just over two thirds of respondents came from the 35-54 age group.



Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	0 - 15	5	3.704%
B	16 - 24	7	5.185%
C	25 - 34	8	5.926%
D	35 - 44	42	31.11%
E	45 - 54	52	38.52%
F	55 - 64	8	5.926%
G	65+ years	5	3.704%
H	Not Answered	8	5.926%

Q. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

10% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled.

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Yes	13	9.630%
B	No	115	85.19%
C	Not Answered	7	5.185%

Q. What is your ethnicity?

Just over half of all respondents (56%) of respondents categorised themselves as White British. The next largest ethnic group of respondents were Asian/Asian British Indian (12%).

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0	0%
B	Asian or Asian British - Indian	16	11.85%
C	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0%
D	Asian or Asian British - Other	1	0.7407%
E	Black or Black British - African	5	3.704%
F	Black or Black British - Caribbean	0	0%
G	Black or Black British - Other	0	0%
H	Chinese	0	0%
I	Mixed - White & Asian	0	0%
J	Mixed - White & African	0	0%
K	Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	0	0%
L	Mixed - Other	1	0.7407%
M	White British	76	56.30%
N	White Irish	6	4.444%
O	White Other	10	7.407%
P	Other	1	0.7407%
Q	I do not wish to disclose	13	9.630%
R	Not Answered	6	4.444%

Online survey responses

Question 1

Do you agree with the proposal regarding transport assistance to voluntary aided schools?

Two thirds of respondents did not agree with this proposal.

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Agree	38	28.15%
B	Disagree	88	65.19%
C	Not Answered	9	6.667%

Those in agreement:

The main comments were that this proposal would make things fairer with pupils attending non-voluntary schools and that parents were making a choice, often for a better education and should have to pay for it, though concern was raised about children with special needs.

AGREE Do you agree with the proposal regarding transport assistance to voluntary aided schools? - Q1Comments	Responses
Parents should pay because they're getting a better education.	2
Parents should pay because should be outside the school curriculum, so parents should make their own provision	1
Parents should pay because it's parental choice to go beyond their catchment area	7
Parents should pay because it is only fair that those attending voluntary aided schools are treated the same as others	2
Generally, parents should pay, but there should be some help for those on low incomes.	1
Transport should be offered at a nominal sum - but concerned that parents with special needs children are already getting assistance for transport - shouldn't get it twice.	1
Remove it, but make provision for children with special needs	1

Those not in agreement:

The main concerns of those in disagreement were that these changes will disrupt education, threaten the existence of voluntary schools/religious schools in the community, affect

people's right to religious worship, impact on educational attainment, most vulnerable children and households will be affected the most, it will affect children's ability to take part in after school activities, lead to increased car use, it's a deterrent to FE, there's inadequate public transport on schools route and that families will be affected most.

DISAGREE Do you agree with the proposal regarding transport assistance to voluntary aided schools? - Q1Comments	Responses
The service should be means tested	1
Changes that force pupils to move will disrupt their education	4
This may lead to the closure of faith Schools, and they are an important part of the community	1
If this leads to closure of faith schools, it will affect league tables as they are better performers/affects the quality of education available to children	2
Changes could lead to substantial increase in car use, against council transport strat	2
If the LA has made the decision to put pupils in a school, they shouldn't have to pay.	1
It would deter pupils from less well-off households attending sixth form/college	2
It would cause financial hardship to some households	5
Would affect the most vulnerable - disabled children	1
Faith schools are being targeted	5
If students have to make their own way over long distances, they will be more vulnerable	2
Travelling times could affect ability of pupils to take part in extra curricular activities	1
Cuts should be found in other areas	2
Puts Leicester out of line with Leicestershire - postcode lottery	2
Having a choice fo schools drives up standards - less choice leads to complacency	1
Parents ill health makes it impossible to take the kids	1
I need more information to make a decision (will bus still run/will there be discount)	1
Should be a contributing scheme	2
Affects people's right to religious worship	7
This service should be provided 'free' as have already paid taxes for it.	1
There isn't adequate public transport for this route	1
Working parents will not be able to take their children the distances required to go to faith schools - without provided transport	2
This change discriminates against families	1

Suggestions for mitigation

Look at making savings from other services, provide more information about the likely travel scenarios if these proposals are adopted.

Question 2

Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 transport arrangements?

Just over three quarters of respondents disagreed with this proposal.

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Agree	24	17.78%
B	Disagree	104	77.04%
C	Not Answered	7	5.185%

Those in agreement:

The main concerns of those in agreement are that parents should contribute, children should get part time work to pay, there should be some element of assistance for those in most need.

However there was some concern about the lack of integrated public transport in Leicester and the possible impact on car use/congestion, and also that these changes could cause pressures on some local colleges.

AGREE: Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 transport arrangements? - Q2Comments	Responses
Agree in principle, but is this consistent with RPA (Raising the participation Age)	2
Agree with part one of the proposal, but not part two - cutting help to low income families.	1
Agree in principle, but lack of integrated travel in Leicester, (eg, Arriva/First) it's expensive.	1
As there's no requirement, this proposal makes sense	1
Kids should get part-time work to pay for transport	2
Either parents take responsibility for traveller, or kids should use closer post 16 facilities	1
Good public transport needs to be provided to prevent road congestion	1
Agree in principle, but concerned this change could cause large waiting lists for some colleges near to students who travel at the moment	1
Parents should pay a nominal sum.	1
Families who can pay, should do so.	1

Those not in agreement:

The main concerns of those who disagree is that the proposed changes would penalise low income working families, that FE would become inaccessible to low income families, that some children have to go to particular colleges (SEN), that it will discourage FE, that vulnerable children will have to use public transport, those who move will have their education disrupted, and that it would be bad for Leicester's long-term future, and that the wider costs of children not going to 6th form will outweigh the benefits/savings.

DISAGREE: Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 transport arrangements? - Q2Comments	Responses
Agree with first part of proposal, but don't support removal of discretionary assistance	1
Penalising hardworking families	3
Having to move colleges will disrupt education	2
Will this change again when statutory school leaving age becomes 18?	2
Sometimes disabled children need to travel to an appropriate school/college - have to travel	2
Safety of disabled children could be compromised	1
Making post 16 education inaccessible to poorer families	6
Needy children get placed outside of Leicester by the LA and so they (LA) should pay	1
Deters children from further education contrary to govt policy	6
Regardless of low income, support should be maintained and not means tested	1
Children will be more vulnerable if travel themselves	1
Savings should be made elsewhere	2
Could lead to a reduction in post 16 education provision	1
Bad for long-term future of Leicester if kids deterred from post 16 education (children and local economy)	5
All students should be supported to encourage high levels of education	3
LCC should use it's buying power to negotiate cheap passes for students	2
There a lack of alternatives to sixth form - apprenticeships/jobs. This would lead to increase in NEETS and associated costs that go with this	2
Should be a contributory scheme	1
Reduces choice	1
Could lead to children not at school and increase anti-social behaviour	1
Taking children to school penalises working parents	2
Will lead to increased traffic on the roads	1
Associated costs of this proposal will outweigh the savings	1
Children of poorer families hardest hit	2

Suggestions for mitigation

LCC could use its buying power to negotiate cheap bus passes for children.

Question 3

Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements?

More than four fifths of respondents did not agree with this proposal.

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Agree	19	14.07%
B	Disagree	115	85.19%
C	Not Answered	1	0.7407%

Those in agreement:

Those in agreement suggested looking at needs on an individual basis and making sure those in most need get the help that's available, but concern that there should be some targeted help.

AGREE: Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements? - Q3	Responses
As long as it's paid monthly	1
Disability criteria needs to be looked at to make sure that those who need the help actually get it.	1
Special needs children can use public transport. They should be assessed on an individual basis to see how much they need assistance	1
Families who can pay, should, due to the difficult financial times - other important services should not suffer because people are getting unnecessary help.	1
Significant savings will be made by this proposal	1

Those not in agreement:

The main concerns of those in disagreement revolved around the following: SEN pupils not having a choice in where they go, the effect on families/consider the family set-up (lone parents), discouraging SEN pupils from FE, the impact on other services and the wider impact on society, impact on future life chances of pupils, SEN children would be vulnerable on public transport, that the cuts should be found elsewhere, and a concern that these changes could lead to segregation.

DISAGREE: Do you agree with the proposal regarding Post 16 special educational needs transport arrangements? - Q3	Responses
Travel often essential for SEN pupils as appropriate school/college not the closest - no choice	4
Parents of SEN children will likely already have suffered financial hardship having SEN children - penalised twice	2
SEN children often identified late in schooling and need help to catch up, not to be penalised this way	1
Long-term other costs for LA if this proposal pursued - NEET/more assistance needed in later life/less contribution to society	7
Change could strongly affect the quality of life/earning power of parent carer if SEN children forced to stay at home.	1
If Post 16 Sens are already travelling with under 16s - surely there's no savings as this transport (taxi) will be going anyway, now with empty seat	2
Will discourage Sens from post 16 education	9
Priority for assistance should be given to people who can work over people on benefits who are at home and drop kids off at school	1
SEN students don't get to choose a local school, distances often too far to walk	2
Impact of parents having to take SEN students to school impacts on working families and forces those on low incomes into benefits	3
As LA, by maintaining the SEN statement, has statutorily obliged SEN children to go school post 16 so should support same as under 16	1
Need to consider long-term impact of forcing SEN into NEED/greater assistance in later life	4
Impact on parent/carers - stress means may not be in a position to get Sen to school/poor home environment	3
SEN students will become more dependent and lose gains previously made	1
We have a duty to provide support when the student has no other option	1
Travel training for SEN students needs to be introduced first	2
Where the disability is so profound that they cannot travel/ alone, they should get support	3
Only parents with children in year 11 contacted about this consultation - parents with young children should be contacted as they too soon will be affected	1
This consultation not accessible (need to be able to use the web site) , particularly as some SEN children may have SEN parents	1
There is no EIA detailing impact on families already under pressure due to caring responsibilities	4

Cost of additional services needed, such as family breaks because of stress, or personal Budget means cuts won't save in the long-term	3
It is not clear who's statement is continued after 16 - needs clarity	
Eligibility based on income could disproportionality disadvantage those just above the cut off	3
Should look at the family situation not income - how many children responsible for/lone parent, etc	1
This college was recommended by LA. If we had known transport an issue, this would have formed part of our consideration	1
Consider protecting all those currently free transport arrangements as a transitional arrangement	1
Affects SEN children's right to further education	2
Find cuts elsewhere	3
Means testing will unfairly hit hard working families	2
Assess SEN students individually, as not all have the same needs	2
SEN children are vulnerable and need the care and protection of provided transport	3
Perhaps look at cheaper forms of transport rather than charging (bus vs taxi)	1
All SEN children should be helped regardless	3
Means testing/contributions should be graded/gradual, so not all or nothing once you get past a certain point	1
Proposal will negatively affect the academic progression and inclusion of the most vulnerable/lead to segregation	2
Affect the future life chances of SEN Children	3
Lone parents hardest hit	1

Suggestions for mitigation

Means testing/contributions should be scaled so that it's not all or nothing past a certain point, look at cheaper transport (bus vs taxi), provide travel support for those SEN who cannot travel alone, look at assisting working families who don't have the time to transport kids, look at introducing 'travel training' for children, look at protecting all those currently in the system as a transition arrangement.

Concerns about the consultation process

There were also some issues with the consultation – that notification should have been sent to those with SEN children under 11 and that alternative proposals should have been put forward.

Question 4

Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 transport if the council had to make further budget savings?

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Yes	13	9.630%
B	No	120	88.89%
C	Not Answered	2	1.481%

Those in agreement:

The main concerns of those that agree are that this should be a last resort.

Q4. AGREE: Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 transport if the council had to make further budget savings? - Q4Comments	Responses
Yes, as a last resort	2
There is sufficient local transport for this to happen	1
This would give children the opportunity to travel to and from school	1

Those not in agreement:

The main concerns of those who disagree are it will stop poorer children accessing FE and impact on their families, NEETs will increase, there will be an impact on other services/benefits, choice in education would be affected, that it is contrary to equalities legislation (make adjustments for those in need), contravenes pledges in the Mayor's 100 days programme and that there is a lack of adequate public transport.

Q4. DISAGREE: Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 transport if the council had to make further budget savings? - Q4Comments	Responses
Some said their comments were as Q3.	
Target other services/savings instead	8
Fewer people will access further education	2
NEETs will increase	1
Stop poorer children going on to further education/impact on their families	12
Removes social inclusion	1
Will lead to higher costs for Adult Social Care/other services/benefits	3
Affects education/life chances/quality of life of the most vulnerable (eg, disabled)	4
Choice in education would be affected	3
Leicester has an obligation to get students to post 16 facilities having established just a few that are not within everyone's easy reach	1

Anti equalities - Equalities Act says you have to make reasonable adjustments for those in need not treat everyone the same (and Human Rights Act)	2
Proposal needs clarification	2
Future Costs to society of a generation not fully educated	1
Use free bus passes to make use of currently under used public transport	1
If subsidy is removed, a period of transition should be agreed as with govt end to Educational Maintenance Allowance	1
This change is against Mayor's 100 Days programme - to provide a bus users panel to include representing the needs of our young people, and promise 74 To launch Leicester public transport smartcard scheme (council should publish what progress has been made on this)	1
Discriminates against children according to their parents circumstances	1
Catholics are being targeted	1
The distance involved prohibit being able to travel without paid for transport	1
There is a lack of adequate public transport	1
Affect religious choices	1
Will lead to a two tier education system for the have and have nots	1
Service should be means tested to provide a subsidy for poorer children	1

Suggestions for mitigation

Use free bus passes to make use of under used public transport.

Question 5

Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 special education needs transport if the council had to make further budget savings?

Almost 90% of respondents do not agree with this proposal.

Key	Option	Total	Percent of All
A	Yes	8	5.926%
B	No	120	88.89%
C	Not Answered	7	5.185%

Those in agreement:

The only comment was that if it is removed that there should be the opportunity to use a personal budget to pay for it instead.

AGREE: Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 special education needs transport if the council had to make further budget savings? - Q5Comments	Responses
Providing there was the opportunity to use a personal budget to pay for transport.	1

Those not in agreement:

The main concerns of those in disagreement are that it will penalise low income working families, affect the rights and freedoms of the disabled, impact on the costs of other services and SEN pupils may be vulnerable on public transport.

DISAGREE: Would you support the removal of all discretionary Post 16 special education needs transport if the council had to make further budget savings? - Q5Comments	Responses
Many comments referenced their previous answers	
Will penalise low income working families	1
Affects the rights and freedoms of disabled people	6
Save money in other areas instead	3
The cost on other services would outweigh these changes	2
Decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis	1
Cut benefits instead	1
Disabled people are vulnerable on public transport	1
Will affect the most vulnerable, including their employment prospects	1
No, will negatively affect families (pressure/finances) - partic SEN children's parents	2
No, underestimates the value of education and the role transport plays in this.	1
Not unless a subsidy is provided	1
Will penalise the poor	1
Will penalise vulnerable children	1
Will stop some SEN children actually getting to school	1

Suggestions for mitigation

Cost savings should be made on a case-by-case basis, make savings in other areas/there should be a subsidy system.

Question 6

The city council believes that these proposals are fair, equitable and help ensure that limited resources are targeted at those most in need and least able to meet those needs in other ways. Do you have any comments on this aspect of the proposals?

Those who responded were mainly concerned with the inequalities of the proposals:

The city council believes that these proposals are fair, equitable and help ensure that limited resources are targeted at those most in need and least able to meet those needs in other ways. Do you have any comments on this aspect of the proposals?	Responses
Not equitable - Is guidance on transport being complied with	1
Not equitable Are all other groups in different services getting similar cuts?	1
Not equitable - Proposals assume an element of choice, which circumstances often mean is not the case	1
Not equitable - The impact of disability within the family unit needs to be accounted for	2
Not equitable - Single parents need help	3
Not equitable - low income working families will be worst affected	5
Not equitable - children/young people are vulnerable group, should be protected form cuts	9
Not equitable - targeting SEN/disabled students who are vulnerable reduces educational chances	7
Not equitable - other areas are more appropriate for cuts	6
Not equitable - poor families will be badly affected	7
Not equitable - if means testing introduced, poor qualifying students will be stigmatised	1
Not equitable - why have we not been consulted on making a contribution to travel costs	1
Not equitable - no alternative methods of transport have been put forward in this consultation for us to consider	1
Not equitable - restricts religious freedoms	2
Not equitable - children of low income families will lose out	1
Not equitable - alternatives need to be looked at first	1
These changes are not in keeping with One Leicester manifesto	1
Not equitable - these services have already been paid for by council tax.	1
Not equitable - some children won't be able to get to school	1
Not equitable - affecting children's futures	1
Not equitable - all children should have a choice of school	1

Suggestions for mitigation

Look to other areas for cuts, protect the most vulnerable, put forward alternative proposals for transport for people to consider, and that the changes are discriminatory.

Question 7

Any other comments?

If you have any general comments	Responses
Faith schools are not easily accessible	1
Proposals Will result in increased traffic congestion	3
It is harmful to make changes to discretionary post 16 education so soon before the govt raises leaving age to 18	2
Find the cuts in other areas	6
Parents should be accountable for school choices	1
Protect SEN students	1
Come up with alternative transport - speak to voluntary providers/family car share	2
We need to be consulted over willingness to contribute	1
Only assist income support cases as those with disability benefits already compensated	1
Make the changes only for new students so that those who made choices under the old system can continue	1
Close large college sand introduce smaller, more accessible post 16 colleges.	1
A report should be published for this consultation showing how these changes will impact on other council costs	1
These proposals will stop SEN children going to schools they need	1
Ensure families are currently using their benefits correctly before giving any more support	2
These changes are discrimination (partic faith school changes)	3
Will lead to education disruptions	3
Need to think more about children's future	1
Put protection in place for poor families	1
Need to consider the safety of children	1
Stopping children going to Faith schools will affect the school results for the City.	1
Low income lone parents need help	1

The main concerns of those providing general comments were on the negative impacts of the proposals (negative impact on SEN pupils, faith schools and low income families) – and how to mitigate them.

Suggestions for mitigation

Come up with alternative transport plans, speaking to the voluntary sector and looking to set up family car share schemes, produce a report on how these changes will impact on other services/costs, close large colleges and introduce smaller, more accessible post 16 colleges, consult on the willingness to contribute to travel costs, make the changes only for new students so that current students won't be disrupted and protect SEN students, put safeguards in place to protect the children of poorer families.