



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 22 MAY 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Batool – Chair
Councillor Bonham – Vice-Chair

Councillor Barnes
Councillor March
Councillor Pantling

Councillor Mahesh
Councillor Dr Moore
Councillor Singh Sangha

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146. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None were received.

147. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

148. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION: SEND POST-16 TRANSPORT: PROPOSED POLICIES

The Monitoring Offer submitted a report informing the Commission that the Executive decision, taken by the Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People on 13 May 2025 relating to Post-16 SEND Transport, had been the subject of a 5-member call-in under the procedures at Rule 12 of Part 4D, City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules, of the Council's Constitution.

The Chair invited the proposer of the call-in, Councillor Bonham, to present their reasons for the call-in. The following points were raised:

- The proposed policy did not offer adequate provision for Post 16 SEND school transport assistance.
- Proposals would not ensure that every young person could travel to their

place of education.

- A policy was needed that did not lead to parents / carers having to their end employment.
- Families could be forced into poverty if paying for school transport.
- The following statement was submitted:

The CYPE Commission notes the changes in the SEND Post-16 Transport Proposed Policies since consideration by the CYPE Commission on 25/02/2025.

We welcome that it is now proposed that council funded bus or taxi can be considered in some circumstances. But we note that the Equality Impact Assessment estimates that only 4% (11 Young People) might be offered council funded bus or taxi whereas 80% (167 Young People) travel by council provided bus or taxi this year.

We are concerned that the “demonstratable financial hardship” criteria for consideration of council provided bus or taxi will leave some parents or carers: in severe financial hardship; or unable to source alternative transport; or compelled to give up employment in order to transport young people.

We are concerned that the proposed policy will lead to some Young People not receiving appropriate education and becoming NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training)

The CYPE commission therefore recommends that the following changes be made to the SEND Post-16 Transport Proposed Policies:

Remove the wording of 5.10. and replace with: -

5.10 “Limited exceptional circumstances” will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Applications for consideration could be made for example in cases where: -

- *A student or a parent/carer can evidence that the student’s needs are such that the standard PTB offer will be insufficient and without further support they could not attend their place of education.*
- *Where despite the support of the standard PTB it is not reasonably practical for parents or carers to provide transport themselves or to source suitable arrangements.*
- *Where immediate family or family network members cannot consistently be available to support the student with their journey or they do not have use of a suitable vehicle or public transport route.*
- *Where a parent or carer supporting the student with their journey is not reasonably practical without adverse effects on their other caring responsibilities.*
- *Where a parent or carer supporting the student with their journey is not reasonably practical whilst continuing in employment, or a reduction or flexibility in hours of employment would cause financial hardship as described.*
- *Other relevant factors may exceptionally be considered.*
- *Financial assessments would take account of the income, savings and*

essential spending of the household and those with parental responsibility.

Further verbal clarification was given as follows:

The CYPE commission therefore wishes:

- *For a recorded resolution that the Strategic Director will put into operation, guidance and in communication to all impacted by the changes and examples where considerations could be made in limited exceptional circumstances.*
- *The first of these:*
 - *A student or a parent/carer can evidence that the student's needs are such that the standard PTB offer will be insufficient and without further support they could not attend their place of education.*
 - *Secondly, situations where the circumstances mean that practically and or financially, it is not possible for parents or carers to make arrangements for transport despite their best efforts.*
 - *Thirdly, where a parent or carer supporting the student with their journey is not reasonably practical while continuing employment, or a reduction or flexibility hours as following could cause fractural hardship described. Each case should be decided after a holistic assessment of the circumstances on a case by case basis.*
- *Financial assessment should take into account the income, savings and essential spending of the household of those with parental responsibility.*

The Chair invited the seconder of the call-in, Councillor Dr Moore, to add to the proposer's statement. The following points were raised:

- Thanks were given for the contributions of Parents / Carers and Councillor Bonham toward the call-in process.
- Paragraph 6.7 of the proposed policy referenced potential withdrawal of transport due to challenging behaviour. Those with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health needs (SEMH) were likely to exhibit such behavioural patterns – This was clarified by the Director of Education to mean behaviour beyond these circumstances. SEMH considerations would be addressed in the Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Further clarification could be provided in the practical guidance for school transport assistance applications.

The Chair invited Assistant City Mayor for Children and Young People, Councillor Pantling, to respond and the following points were raised:

- Thanks were reiterated to families and Officers for their efforts towards the policy reviews.
- Matters had been scrutinised thoroughly throughout the process.

- Significant effort was invested in fulfilling the legal responsibilities to support the young people in the city.
- The policy had been designed to create the best outcomes possible for young people and families within budget.
- All children would be assessed individually to meet their needs.

The Chair invited the Strategic Director for Social Care and Education, to respond and the following points were raised:

- The scrutiny work and proposed motion was welcomed.
- A recent judicial review for Birmingham City Council had been held in mind when considering changes to policy.
- A holistic approach would be taken in school transport eligibility assessments, considering individual circumstances.

Members of the Commission discussed the report which highlighted the following points:

- Young People's Council Representative (YPCR) Mario advised that the YPCR's are available to represent and support the young people of Leicester.
- Alternative support mechanisms in place included; Independent Travel Training, supporting families to access other benefits, use of the disabled persons travel pass, the Motability Scheme and the Connexions Information and Guidance Service. Bursaries were also available from some colleges.
- Independent Travel Training had been of noted benefit to those young people with sight impairments.
- School Transport Assistance eligibility assessments were aligned with the free school meals network. Those qualifying under this criteria would not be required to supplement costs towards school transport assistance.
- Young people assessed as having complex SEND needs would continue to qualify for Post 16 SEND School Transport Assistance.
- There was a strong offer of good college courses within the Leicester City boundaries. Post 16 Young people with complex SEND needs attending establishments outside of the boundaries could qualify for school transport assistance under new policy.
- The Connexions service provided assistance to those with EHCPs that did not evidence complex SEND Needs.
- Further scrutiny to track the impact of Travel Training was suggested.
- Young people with continued course arrangements, transitioning from Year 12 to Year 13 would receive continued transport assistance.
- A £300K investment into Travel Training, funded from savings made, was dependent on the call-in decision and would be expand the current offer. A Train the Trainers programme would aid in furthering expertise.
- Bespoke Travel Training was tailored towards needs and could be repeated.

- Best Travel Training practise could be shared from highly successful venues, such as at Ellesmere College.
- Data gathered on applications, appeals and outcomes could come back to scrutiny.
- Regarding appeals, the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines gave a 40 working day timeframe. Where possible, timescales would be less.
- Appeals were likely to be handled by senior staff. Heads of Service, Special Education Service, Transport Manager, Connexions, and Senior SEND Staff would be involved.
- For families requiring additional support, outside of the aforementioned avenues, some colleges offered additional support, and independent advice could be sought through the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).
- A quality impact assessment had taken place, and mitigations had been put in.
- Regarding Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) there was a generous allowance when benchmarked against other Local Authorities.
- It was rare for EHCP's to include a requirement for school transport assistance as an educational outcome, however where this was the case, provision be made.
- Moving forward, it was hoped that self-assessment would come in and this would allow for evidence to be gathered and measured.
- Appeal outcomes provided vital information and reports could come annually to scrutiny.
- Resourcing levels and digital ways were sufficient to meet with the demands of the proposed policy.
- For young people in education, there could be a narrowing of choice, but educational needs would still be met. Internships were an example of good alternatives.
- If upcoming data showed gaps in provision, this would be monitored and developments to the offer could come.
- Peaks in demand during the academic year were anticipated, but this was a continuing sequence. Resource monitoring and shifting would continue as before on pressure points.
- Savings made on Post 16 SEND school transport would feed into the increasing demand on statutory school transport assistance.
- PTB shortfall figures given by Homefield College (under jurisdiction of Leicestershire County Council) were referenced by members and would be circulated.
- Regarding family financial assessments, there would always be an element of intrusiveness. This was unavoidable with the means testing but the aim was to reduce this where possible.
- Due to the timing of the proposed policy, placements for the upcoming academic year would already be in place. This formed the reasoning for continued provision for those transitioning from years 12-13. SENDIASS were available for independent advice.
- Travel Training was a holistic offer which considered mental, emotional and physical health.
- Supporting professionals had a responsibility Key Stage 4 onwards to

work towards Travel Training.

- To qualify for assistance under low-income criteria there would be a hardship test based on parents / carers income. Some post 18 students had EHCPs up to the age of 25 and this was accounted for within the proposed Post 16 SEND School Transport policy.
- For those with fluctuating issues, this should be stated on the eligibility application.
- Parents / Carers would be consulted over any Travel Training issues arising.
- A significant number of other Local Authorities had already ceased to offer, or reduced their Post 16 SEND School Transport provision.
- Those needing to apply under the Exceptional Circumstances element of policy would need to highlight circumstances at the point of application.
- University education was not covered in EHCPs.
- A round of communications regarding the application process would go out to families imminently.
- Where institutions located outside of the City boundary were the closest establishment able to meet the needs of the young person, this would need to be considered within the holistic eligibility assessment and evident as an educational outcome on the EHCP.
- The SEND system was due to be reviewed very soon, and this could affect the situation more widely.
- The Equality Impact Assessment was transparent in that potential negative impacts on families and young people had been recognised. Financial requirements had led to a policy change requirement and mitigation strategies had been put into place, such as increasing the Travel Training offer. The proposed policy was lawful.
- Those without transport and having parental responsibility should make this evident at the point of transport application for assessment.
- Parents / carers had assumed responsibility to resolve school transport issues where eligibility for assistance was not met. For Post 16 young people, aid was available from the supporting services where parents / carers did not support.
- Forecasting had been achieved by separating data on educational cohorts.
- There was a holistic approach to travel training which was sensitive to the fluctuating motivation of the young person.
- Benchmarking evidenced successful outcomes for neighbouring authorities who had adopted similar Post 16 SEND school transport policies.

The Chair asked if the proposer wished to withdraw the call-in.

Councillor Bonham moved that, following the points raised during the meeting and the guidance adopting the points made as per the earlier statement, the call-in be withdrawn. This was seconded by Cllr Dr Moore and the call-in was withdrawn.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the call-in be withdrawn.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- For operational guides to inform on the changes to policy and give more information on policy regarding student behavioural matters as per the statement put forward by the proposer.
- To review best practise on Travel Training with an eye to successful venues such Ellesmere College.

ACTIONS:

- Outcome specifics gathered on Travel Training, applications, appeals and outcomes would come back to scrutiny.
- PTB shortfall figures given by Homefield College referenced by members would be circulated.

The meeting finished at 19:30.