



SEND Transport Policy and Service Update

Children Young People and Education Scrutiny
Commission

Date of meeting: 20 January 2026

Lead directors: Laurence Mackie-Jones, Strategic
Director, Social Care and Education

Sophie Maltby, Director of SEND and Education

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
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- Report version number: 1.0

1. Summary

- 1.1. On 13 May 2025 a [decision](#) was made by the Assistant City Mayor (Children and Young People) which approved the SEND travel policy for the 2025/26 and subsequent academic years and the post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year.
- 1.2. This change signified a required cultural shift in policy and practice. The main risk was that, in some cases the revised level of support provided by the council to young people and adults (aged 16 to 25) who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) might cause young people and adults to become NEET i.e. not in employment or education.
- 1.3. This report provides an update to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission regarding the service, including the policy implementation.
- 1.4. The Council supports transport needs through a combination of taxis, bus journeys and personal transport budgets (PTBs). There is a statutory requirement to provide support to children of school age; provision for the post-16 age group is discretionary.
- 1.5. The decision surrounding the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for the 2026/2027 academic year follows a separate process when outcomes from the Autumn term can be analysed in January 2026. It is currently proposed that there will be no change to entitlements in the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2026 - 2027. As such Appendix B contains the Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026 - 2027 that will be subject to a consultation with relevant parties. The Year 12/13 exemption has been removed because that was only for the 2025/2026 academic year.
- 1.6. This report details:
 - The outcomes of the policy implementation.
 - Details of the service transformation programme.
 - Early analysis and the forward plan.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

The Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission is invited to:

- Note the update surrounding the post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year implementation.
- Note the update surrounding the transformation programme and the Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 (Appendix B) to be consulted upon.

3. Detailed report

3.1. The Council's policies for the current academic year are published and available here: [Home to school transport | LCC Family Hub](#).

3.2. The policies set out arrangements for provision of transport assistance to the following groups who attend schools, colleges or certain other institutions:

- "children" – those not yet of compulsory school age or who are of compulsory school age (broadly 5-16 years old);
- "young people" – those of sixth form age (between 16 and 18 and those aged 19 or over who are continuing on a course which they started before they turned 19), including young people with SEND; and
- "adults" – those aged between 19 and 25 who have SEND.

3.3. The law makes separate stipulations about children, young people and adults. In practice, young people and adults are treated the same way in Leicester policy: this enables us to ensure we provide the right level of support to meet their individual needs.

3.4. Available support depends on need, but might include any of the following (provided free of charge):

- (a) Arrangement of a taxi by the Council.
- (b) Bus travel on a Council provided vehicle.
- (c) A personal transport budget (PTB) – a sum of money which can be used to pay for any means of transport (including a lift in a family car, or a bus pass). The current rate is 45p per mile plus £500 per year.
- (d) In exceptional circumstances where there is not full entitlement to council commissioned transport the council may contribute to the cost.

3.5. Data at the end of term showed 455 young people were supported during the 2024/2025 academic year who could be in the post 16 cohort at the start of the 2025/2026 academic year i.e. in year 11 and above.

3.6. Of those, 100 young people would be exempt from the new post 16 policy implementation due to moving from Year 12 to 13 next academic year.

3.7. At the end of November 2025 there have been 219 post 16 SEND transport applications received. Applications were not required for those in Year 13 in the 2025/2026 academic year unless there was a change in circumstances. Parents / carers of those in the exempt cohort were notified separately to provide additional clarification.

3.8. Based on information held in the Autumn term it is projected that those in post 16 education and above who will receive SEND transport support under the new policy are as follows:

Post 16 Application Status	Volume	% of cohort
Council arranged transport – Taxi provided	95	44%
Council arranged transport – Internal bus provided	65	30%
Personal Transport Budget (PTB)	52	25%
Enhanced PTB	3	1%
Total	215	100%

- 3.9. There have been 15 appeals in total. Of those four went on to become Stage 2 appeals. There have been no appeals rejected with no support offered. Of the Stage 2 appeals, two were offered enhanced PTB support in addition to the standard PTB and two were rejected due to gaps in information.
- 3.10. The average cost of enhanced PTB's is £1900 per month. Evidence with regards spend has been obtained and attendance will be closely monitored to ensure best value. Additionally, the service delivery is being audited now and there is a commitment to implement efficiency findings at pace. A review of all-age use of enhanced PTB's (which is used in very limited circumstances) will be completed in March 2026.
- 3.11. The financial impact of post 16 changes is estimated to be a reduction in spend due to an increase of around 38% receiving PTB's in the 2025/2026 academic year compared to 2024/2025 rather than council commissioned transport. The average cost of council commissioned transport in 2024/2025 was £9.5k on average per student compared to £2.4k for PTB.
- 3.12. A person-centred approach was adopted to post-16 application assessment, and it is by actively listening to parent / carer feedback that the process successfully evolved over the Summer.
- 3.13. An improved approach to feedback, service evaluation and data gathering will be developed but anecdotal feedback from parents and carers (from approximately 100 hours of telephone communication) has included:
 - They have broadly appreciated the approach adopted
 - They would like longer to plan
 - They would like improved clarity regarding what is needed to support the financial part of assessment at the beginning of the application process
- 3.14. Internal checks have been undertaken and based on information held, no young person or adult learner in post 16 education or older (16-25) in Leicester is NEET because they have had an application for SEND Transport refused.
- 3.15. Data is not the only focus in this area, all schools have been communicated with to emphasise the importance of the partnership role in this area. A collaborative approach to share intelligence has been sought with contact details reiterated along with a commitment that officers will act fast to ensure appropriate support.
- 3.16. Officers have factored in considerations including impact on families receiving short breaks support, children who are looked after, including kinship carers and parents / carers in safe accommodation. A simplistic approach to financial hardship has not been adopted and when considering exceptional circumstances, the focus is a holistic analysis of need and never a blanket approach.
- 3.17. The service standard meant that it has been unusual for parents / carers to have to wait longer than five working days for a response to an application. At times, when additional information has been needed, applications have been protracted. An improved application form will be in place in Spring 2026.
- 3.18. By Spring 2026, ringfenced, specialist operational support will be put in place and be part of a new team with the proposed name of the Independence and Transport service. This will enable tight standards surrounding monitoring each part of the application process (surrounding both timeliness and quality of service).
- 3.19. The aims of the service are:

- to empower children and young people with SEND to succeed on their own unique journeys toward independent adulthood,
- to support children and young people in gaining greater independence within their communities,
- to maximise learning opportunities during travel between home and school, building confidence and resilience along the way and,
- to continue the current remit of the SEND Transport group as part of the deepening of service provision.

3.20. These aims have been formed after listening to the Big Mouth Forum in June 2025 and hearing what is important to them surrounding independence and transport skills. Visioning will continue in future months building on learning from the Preparing for Adulthood Visioning Event in November 2025.

3.21. The Independence and Transport service will also see the development of the council's independent travel training offer. The council's offer has predominantly been a train the trainer model but outcome data regarding the real-world impact for young people remains less evidenced. The courses however attract professionals nationally and feedback during the course itself is positive.

3.22. To improve outcome data, ringfenced resource dedicated to travel training (2 full time equivalent officers at Grades 8 and 6) will be in place to develop service delivery. This will enable parents and carers to be proactively contacted in February 2026. Specifically, parents / carers of those in Years 11 and 13 will be prioritised as 2026/2027 will potentially be a significant transition year.

3.23. Training will also be offered to those undertaking corporate parenting roles within childrens social care to ensure best value and a unified approach across childrens services.

3.24. A further two grade 8, full time equivalent officers will also be recruited to deliver in person travel training. Building on the successful pilot work undertaken to date with one young person. The workshop training is being developed closely with Gloucestershire Council who have thirteen years of experience delivering what is perceived as the national best practice standard. The model will be adapted to be successful in Leicester communities with our differing geography, infrastructure and demographic of SEND. This support exists within pockets in the current system. Travel training is well embedded with the Vision Support team delivering 121 independent travel training sessions in Leicester over many years and schools with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

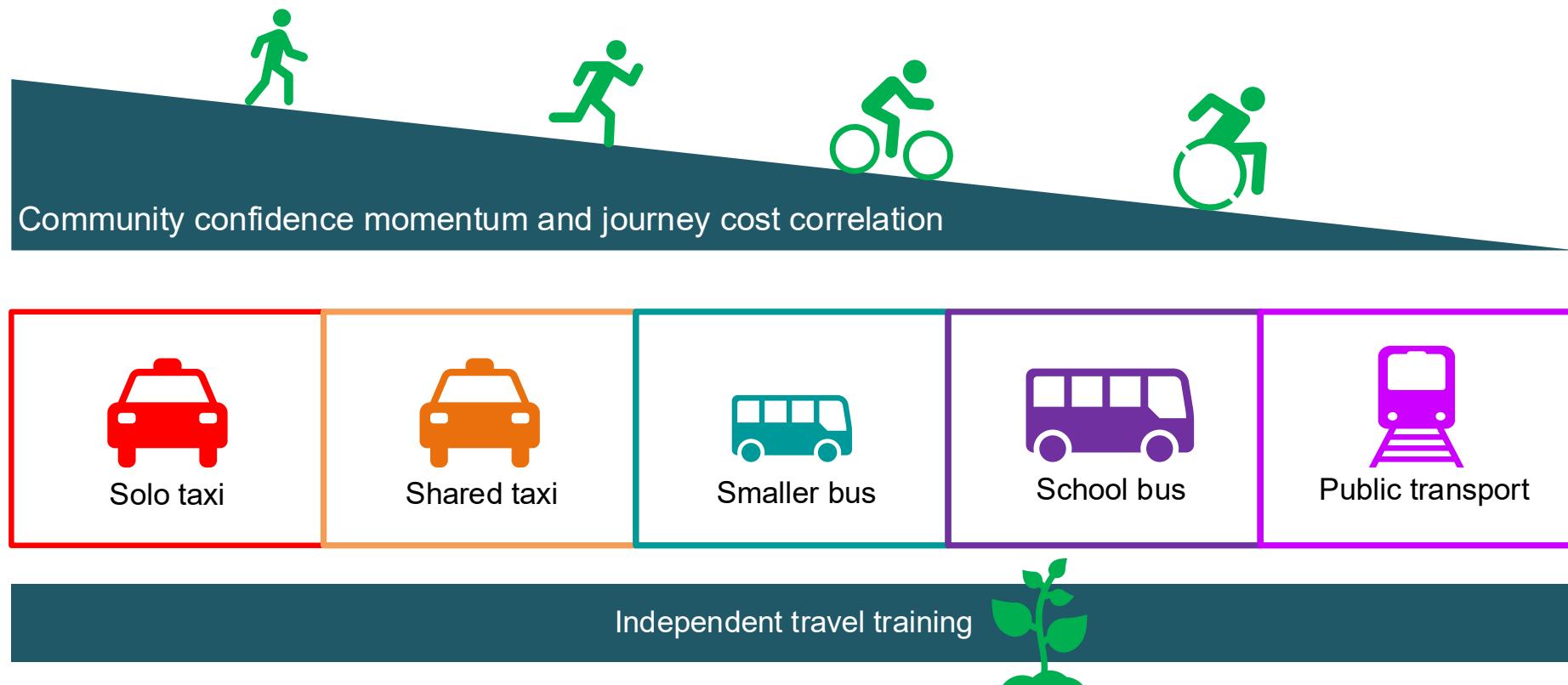
3.25. The training model will recognise the distinction between the skills required to navigate transport and the broader, preparing for adulthood objectives around incentivisation for independent travel i.e. where skills exist but a reason to travel is outweighed by barriers.

3.26. Assessments will take place on an annual basis to ensure opportunities to promote development are capitalised upon. The distinction between eligibility and the most effective transport provided will be embedded consistently.

3.27. A phased approach to service, with a person centred, need-led approach will be developed further. An early intervention, empowering, risk conscious approach, led by individual need will be embedded as an integral part of robust and collaborative operational assessment. Detailed metrics surrounding impact and supporting financial analysis showing cost control have been created to demonstrate the value of service developments.

3.28. The service developments support a strength based, need-led approach to support children and young people to move through the continuum of SEND transport provision (Figure 1)

Figure 1. – Continuum of SEND Transport Provision



3.29. In addition, a procurement to purchase a system to support effective fleet management, journey tendering is underway. This will enable improved communication with parents and carers and attendance monitoring. It will also support the development of sustainability measures.

3.30. Early analysis suggests that no change to entitlement is required for the following reasons:

- Applicant feedback is broadly positive
- Young people in post-16 are getting support under the policy
- Initial NEET analysis substantiates need is being met
- Opportunities to understand operational improvements for next year are well understood
- Families would benefit from stability, clarity and reassurance regarding available support

3.31. However, when service developments, data from the Autumn school term are better understood and consultation has taken place in line with statutory guidance a decision regarding the arrangements that the council considers it necessary to make in policy will proceed.

3.32. There will be ongoing work to test policy impact and the central principle that needs must be met on an individual basis and blanket approaches must be avoided is well understood and embedded practice. The following parties will be consulted with on the Proposed Draft Consultation Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 (Appendix B):

- For sixth form age learners – (Section 509AB of the Education Act 1996)
 - (a) any other local authority that they consider it appropriate to consult,
 - (b) the governing bodies mentioned in subsection (4) of that section, (c) ...
 - (ca) persons in the local authority's area who will be of sixth form age when the statement has effect, and their parents, and
 - (d) any other person specified for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State
- For young adults – (Section 508G of the Education Act 1996)
 - (a) any other local authority that they consider it appropriate to consult;
 - (b) governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector in the authority's area;
 - (ba) proprietors of 16 to 19 Academies in the authority's area;
 - (c) persons in the local authority's area who will be relevant young adults when the arrangements or payments have effect, and their parents;
 - (d) the Secretary of State; and
 - (e) any other person specified by the Secretary of State

It will be demonstrated that these parties have been meaningfully consulted on the proposed draft policy before the preparation of the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027 and related decision report.

3.33. Endnote: a complaint stemming from initial decisions made in September 2023 to the Local Government Ombudsman, found that Leicester SEND Transport policy should be reviewed to ensure it was in line with statutory guidance. Particularly surrounding the requirement that parents must provide information from external professionals to support their application. Although the policy has been reviewed in the interim it has been updated to remove this as a mandatory requirement. The [Home to school and college travel policy 2025-2026](#) now states that parents may provide evidence and there is no requirement that they must when making an application. This was updated in section 4.3 on page 7 following a decision by the Strategic Director of SEND and Education in October 2025. It was a required action that the Ombudsman decision be shared at Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny

Commission with action documented in minutes. Appendix A contains a copy of the Ombudsman's Final Decision, and the minutes of this meeting will be used for this purpose.

4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

4.1 Financial Implications

This report is not seeking any additional funding but is providing an update on the policy and transformation programme. The current SEND home to school transport budget for 2025/26 is £14.7m. Taxi service quality assurance, increased competition and service efficiency regarding contracts mean average taxi costs have fallen. Assessment improvements coupled with support from alternate methods has also reduced expected requests for this service as outlined in this report. Due to these efficiencies, £1m of savings from 2026/27 has been brought forward and delivered in 2025/26 and the SEND home to school transport is forecast to underspend by £0.2m.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 04 December 2025

4.2 Legal Implications

The report sets out the proposal that there be no change to current entitlements in the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2026/2027 (the TPS).

The proposed TPS details the arrangements that the council consider are necessary to facilitate the attendance of young people and relevant young adults in education and training post the age of 16. The statutory provisions set out in the report identify the parties to be consulted on the proposed TPS. The results of the consultation should be analysed, prior to any final decision being made, to ensure that any decision making is lawful, follows a fair process and is reasonable.

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement is required to be published on or before 31 May 2026 for the following academic year.

Signed: Julia Slipper, Principal Lawyer (Education & Employment); Tel ext 6855

Dated: 4 December 2025

4.3 Equalities Implications

When making decisions, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Equality Act 2010) by paying due regard, when carrying out their functions, to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.

Decision makers need to be clear about any equality's implications of the proposed option on those likely to be affected by the recommendation and their protected characteristics. Protected groups under the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The report provides an update on the implementation of the new SEND transport policy specifically focussing on the post 16 age group. The protected characteristics of age and disability are the most relevant, and the use of personal transport budgets are designed to offer flexibility and choice enabling families to tailor transport arrangements to their specific needs. The assessment process adopts a person-centred approach.

Signed: Sukhi Biring/Surinder Singh, Equalities Officers

Dated: 4 December 2025

4.4 Climate Emergency Implications

Whilst there are no direct climate emergency implications arising from this report, it should be noted that travel to school represents a significant proportion of journeys made in and from the city, and (except where journeys are undertaken by active travel modes) these add to the city's carbon emissions. Travel as a whole creates around a third of Leicester's carbon emissions from energy and fuel use. Where the council provides transport to school for SEN pupils, the resulting carbon emissions are included in monitoring of the council's own carbon footprint. In 2023/24 SEN transport is estimated to have generated approximately 1200 tonnes of carbon emissions, representing between 7% and 8% of the council total.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 1st December 2025

4.5 Other Implications

Not applicable

Signed:

Dated:

5. Background information and other papers:

- 13 May 2025 [decision](#) made by the Assistant City Mayor (Children and Young People) which approved the new SEND travel policy for the 2025/26 and subsequent academic years and the new post-16 transport policy statement for the 2025/26 academic year.

6. Summary of appendices:

- Appendix A – Ombudsman complaint reference: 24 012 733
- Appendix B – Proposed Draft Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2026-2027