

## Consultation on Discretionary Consultation General Questions

Q. Why is the Council proposing these cuts, which may cause some young people to struggle to get to sixth form or college?

A. The Council is facing continuing reductions in budgets from central government, and all services which are not statutory are now being reluctantly considered for reductions in provision.

Q. Is school attendance now compulsory until a child / young person reaches 18 years (with Raising of the Participation Age or RPA)? If that's the case shouldn't help with transport between 16 and 18 years a statutory requirement for the Council?

A. There has been no change to the school leaving age, so although there is an expectation that young people will remain in education or training after the age of 16, there is no legislation requiring them to do so.

Q. How is 'Low Income Family' defined?

A. We use the same criteria as for free school meals for younger students – currently this is receipt by the parent/ carer or young person of any of the qualifying benefits, or families which are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit.

Q. What other support is available to families on low income or vulnerable post-16 students?

A. The Council will continue to fund subsidies for transport (details) and the most vulnerable can also access the Education Funding Agency (EFA) [16-19 bursaries](#). These national bursaries are managed by sixth forms and colleges, and are intended to provide the necessary financial support to those students from the lowest income households. Where transport costs have been identified as a specific barrier to participation, the bursary can be used to help meet these costs. The 16 to 19 Bursary fund, has two parts, a discretionary bursary and a vulnerable bursary.

In order to be eligible for the vulnerable element of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, the student would have to fall into one of the defined categories, which are:

- in or recently left local authority care
- getting Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name
- disabled and getting both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their own name

If they do not fall into one of the above categories they could apply for a discretionary bursary.

Post-16 providers set their own criteria for discretionary bursaries. Student services can tell potential students about their criteria and any evidence needed.

The national charity [Turn2Us](#) also has extensive information on benefits and grants for full-time students.

## Potential FAQs – Post-16 students from low income families

Q. My child currently receives a free travel pass (or grant) to get to college. Will this continue next year?

A. The changes to support for students from low income families will be for new starters only from September 2016. If your child is eligible for travel help for the 2015/16 academic year, you may still apply in the usual way.

Q. A 'hardship fund' held by the colleges is mentioned, to help the most needy students and families. How would we gain access to this?

A. As part of the consultation, the Council is in discussion with the colleges and sixth forms, particularly those with the greatest numbers of young people who will be impacted by the changes. It is likely that these post-16 providers will add the management of this fund to the other range of support available to 16-19 year olds, for example the EFA 16-19 Discretionary and Vulnerable Student bursaries. This is likely to be accessible via their Student Services department.

## Potential FAQs – Post-16 and Pre-school with SEND

Q. My child currently receives a taxi, minibus (or Personal Travel Budget) to get to college / nursery due to their SEN or disability. Will this continue next year?

A. The changes to eligibility for post-16 students with SEND will be for new starters only from September 2016, although the Council will continue to review all cases regularly and support may be ceased or altered if your circumstances change.

Q. Will the proposed increases to the post-16 contribution to SEND travel support affect everyone or just new starters in September 2016?

A. If approved, the proposed increase of the annual contribution from £370 to £608, and the introduction of a £308 contribution for students from low income families (who are currently exempt) will be for **all students** (post-16 or pre-school) receiving SEND travel assistance from September 2016.

Q. What happens if our family can't, or won't pay the contribution?

A. The Council will allow the payment of the £608 or £304 in six equal instalments of £101.33 or £50.67 (one at the start of each half term). If this is not paid, we will try and negotiate with the family; however if no adequate explanation is given then we will reluctantly need to stop the provision of transport as a last resort until the situation is resolved. Post-16 students may be able to access the following sources of financial help to make the contribution:

- Disability Living Allowance for the young person
- Other benefits claimed by the young person themselves

- Education Funding Agency (EFA) [16-19 bursaries](#)
- Grants for Individuals – many of which are targeted at young people with disabilities
- Other funding advice via [Turn2Us](#) and the [Directory of Social Change](#) (available in libraries)

Q. How were these figures decided?

A. £608 is the current cost of an annual Freedom Pass (a bus ticket for children and young people at school or college) and this is therefore considered to be a fair contribution to the total cost of SEND travel support provided by the Council – which is on average over £7,000 per child per year.

Q. How much will families with pre-school children receiving travel support be expected to pay?

A. The same - £608, or £304 per year if low income. Families with a child with significant disabilities should be able to claim Disability Living Allowance ([DLA](#)) for children which should help to fund this contribution. The Council may consider a pro-rata reduction according to the family's circumstances, if a child at nursery is receiving transport for only one or two days a week.

Q. How is the distance to school or college measured (regarding the 3 mile criteria)?

A. The measurement of the “statutory walking distance” is not necessarily the shortest distance by road. It is measured by the shortest route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may **walk** with reasonable safety. As such, the route measured may include footpaths, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

Q. What is the definition of ‘reasonable’ distance that I may be expected to take my child to their pick up point?

A. This will depend to some extent on your family's circumstances and availability of a vehicle; but this would generally be less than 1 mile.