

## Equality Impact Assessment: Conversation Screening Tool

<b>What is being reviewed?</b>	Home to School Transport Policy
<b>What changes are being made?</b>	Amalgamation of three existing policies (currently one for each town)
<b>Service Unit:</b>	Children's Services
<b>Participants in the conversation:</b>	<p>Angie Hill, Acting Team Manager, School Admissions, Children's Services</p> <p>David Harrop, Passenger Transport Manager, Transport and Engineering</p> <p>Carly Williams, Team Leader, School Admissions, Children's Services</p> <p>Emma Clarke, Acting Team Leader, Free School Meals and Education Transport Team</p>
<b>Conversation date/s:</b>	27 September 2021
<b>Do you know your current or potential client base? Who are the key stakeholders?</b>	<p>Parents and carers of children and young people aged 4-16 living in BCP Council area</p> <p>Young people and their families aged 16-25 living in BCP Council area</p> <p>There are approximately 1800 children and young people in receipt of transport assistance, the majority of which are provided with bus passes or minibus to and from school.</p>
<b>Do different groups have different needs or experiences?</b>	<p>The policy continues to ensure that transport assistance requests are considered based on the statutory minimum requirements for transport assistance.</p> <p>When transport assistance is agreed, assistance will be arranged that meets the identified needs of the specific child/young person and their family.</p> <p>Home to school transport assistance is normally made available for eligible children and young people who attend a qualifying school in the following circumstances:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. they live beyond the statutory walking distance,</li> <li>b. or cannot walk to school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility difficulties;</li> <li>c. or are on a route that is within the statutory walking distance (where a child/young person is accompanied by an adult as necessary) that is considered to be unsafe;</li> <li>d. or receive free school meals, or whose parents/carers receive the maximum working tax credit. Normally assistance will only be provided if the family live beyond the statutory walking distance.</li> </ol> <p>The nearest qualifying publicly funded school is the nearest or catchment school with places available that provides education suitable for the age, ability and aptitude of the child/young person, and any special educational needs or disability the child/young person may have. This means that when seeking transport assistance, a qualifying school is typically the nearest or the catchment school with vacancies unless a low income family is seeking transport assistance for attendance at their nearest secondary faith school for evidenced religious</p>

	<p>reasons.</p> <p>A reasonable distance is legally defined as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Up to two miles walking distance from home to school for statutory school age children under eight years old</li> <li>b. Up to two miles walking distance from home to school for statutory school age children and young people aged eight-16 years old and receiving the maximum working tax credit or the child/young person is eligible for free school meals</li> <li>c. Up to three miles walking distance from home to school for all other statutory school age children and young people aged eight-16 years old</li> </ol> <p>There are some exceptions where home to school transport assistance may be provided and details are included in the policy.</p> <p>Children and young people are eligible for free transport to their nearest denominational secondary school if the family are in receipt of the maximum working tax credit, or the child/young person is eligible for free school meals and the distance to the nearest denominational secondary school is between two miles shortest available walking route and 15 miles shortest available driven route.</p> <p>BCP Council decides the most appropriate means of supporting children and young people to travel to and from school linked to the aims of promoting independence and sustainability, while ensuring cost efficiency. The following types of travel assistance are provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Issue of a travel pass for use on bus and/or train networks, supported by independent travel training, if needed.</li> <li>b. Personal travel budgets for children and young people with an education, health and care plan (EHCP).</li> <li>c. Minibus</li> <li>d. Taxi</li> <li>e. Fuel, wear and tear contribution if it is shown to be a cost-effective solution and/or there are no suitable or appropriate alternative arrangements available.</li> </ol> <p>The opportunity to appeal the decision of the eligibility assessment and the form of travel assistance offered is available to families.</p>
<p><b>Will this change affect any service users?</b></p>	<p>Additional support for Children in Care and families in temporary housing has been provided within the new policy. The policy will not affect most service users because it continues to provide the statutory minimum for transport assistance.</p> <p>The proposed policy sets out a principle of eligibility where the Council admits a child in care to BCP Council on the recommendation of the BCP Council CiC Virtual School (subject to the age/distance criteria) irrespective of the location of and space availability at other schools. Providing transport assistance for</p>

	<p>Children in Care to BCP Council where appropriate will support education continuity for vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>There are approximately 400 children and young people of statutory school age who are Children in Care to BCP Council. The majority are attending schools without the need for transport assistance. We anticipate that low numbers of requests will be made by the Virtual School each year.</p>
<b>What are the benefits or positive impacts of the change on current or potential users?</b>	<p>Introducing a single BCP Council policy will benefit all families who apply for transport assistance as it aligns all three existing policies and provides consistency when assessing transport assistance applications.</p>
<b>What are the negative impacts of the change on current or potential users?</b>	<p>There are two changes within the policy that negatively impact on some residents:</p> <p>Bournemouth residents will no longer be eligible for Year 10 and Year 11 transport assistance due to moving home. However, they can submit an appeal to review the decision. It is difficult to anticipate the number of children the change could impact.</p> <p>A charge for all BCP residents who qualify 16-18-year-olds transport will be introduced (previously the charge applied for Poole residents only). Families in receipt of maximum tax working credits and/or free school meals will have the charged waived. It is anticipated that the charge will impact approximately 100 families. Families will have the opportunity to pay the charge in three instalments.</p>
<b>Will the change affect employees?</b>	<p>A single policy will simplify and align processes by all employees who seek to support families applying for transport assistance and for employees who process applications.</p>
<b>Will the change affect the wider community?</b>	<p>A single policy will be positive for all BCP Council residents as it will provide consistency for all residents across the conurbation when assessing eligibility and providing home to school transport.</p>
<b>What mitigating actions are planned or already in place for those negatively affected by this change?</b>	<p>A public consultation of the draft policy took place from 4 January 2022 until 18 February 2022. Key stakeholders were targeted during the consultation (those already receiving assistance and families applying for Year R, Year 3, Year 7 and Year 9 for 2022/23 academic year).</p> <p>Responses from the consultation have been considered and amendments to the policy have been made. The policy no longer includes a charge for transport assistance for young people aged 19-25-years-old and no longer places minimum distance requirements for post-16 assistance. This is in line with legal advice taken.</p> <p>Families will have the opportunity to access a two stage appeal process if they are unhappy with either the decision or the transport offer.</p>

**Summary of Equality Implications:**

Transport requests will be assessed using the policy criteria. Where the child/young person and/or their family have additional needs or requirements these will be considered during the assessment. Protected characteristics will be taken into consideration when considering requests.

Transport for eligible children and young people will be provided based on the individual needs of the child/young person and/or their family using the criteria in the policy. Protected characteristics will be taken into consideration when providing transport.

There are two changes within the policy that negatively impact on some residents:

1. Bournemouth residents will no longer be eligible for Year 10 and Year 11 transport assistance due to moving home. However, they can submit an appeal to review the decision. It is difficult to anticipate the number of children the change could impact.
2. A charge for all BCP residents who qualify 16-18-year-olds transport will be introduced (previously the charge applied for Poole residents only). Families in receipt of maximum tax working credits and/or free school meals will have the charged waived. It is anticipated that the charge will impact approximately 100 families. Families will have the opportunity to pay the charge in three instalments.

Families will have the opportunity to access a two stage appeal process if they are unhappy with either the decision or the transport offer.

A single policy will be accessible online for all BCP Council residents and paper copies will be provided on request.