

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Decision – 23-00051 - Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Report: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee - 16 May 2023

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Summary: KCC has a legal duty to consult on its policy for Post 16 Transport annually and publish a Post 16 Transport Policy Statement.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member is asked to agree to the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The report is designed to update the Cabinet Member in regard to decisions taken relating to the Kent 16+ Travel Saver and other post 16 transport initiatives.
- 1.2 The attached policy makes it clear that in the first instance there is an expectation that learners will make use of the Kent 16+ Travel Saver, seeking bursary funding support where necessary to secure this as a preferred means of accessing education, training or work-based learning settings. It also sets out the duties on the LA to consider requests for transport and is a continuum of existing policy.
- 1.3 KCC is required to enable access to education and will consider applications for support where a Kent 16+ Travel Saver pass is not suitable. Where support is agreed, the policy makes clear that learners will initially be assessed for Travel Training and alternative transport arrangements will only be provided where this training is not appropriate. Where additional support is refused learners can appeal to the Transport Regulation Committee Appeal Panel.

2. Policy Framework

- 2.1 The Post 16 Transport Policy will assist learners in accessing their preferred learning environments and contribute to children and young people in Kent getting the best start in life and achieving good outcomes by participating in education or training to age 18.

3. The Report

- 3.1 KCC has a duty to consider applications for transport and is required to enable access to education. In most circumstances it meets this duty through the Kent 16+ Travel Saver pass. This is a generous discretionary scheme which aids access to both education and employment with training. This provides up to a 50% reduction in travel costs for the average user. Learning providers, at their discretion, can further subsidise this using bursary funding and we would expect bursary to be provided for up to 50% of the cost for low-income families. Because schools and colleges use bursary funding at their discretion, some choose to subsidise other localised bus travel cards as opposed to the KCC scheme which offers a broader transport offer.
- 3.2 KCC has a duty to consult on and publish its Post 16 Transport Policy Statement every year. Whilst there is no statutory duty to provide transport for Post 16 Learners, there is a duty to consider applications for assistance with transport and to enable access to education and training to age 18. The transport policy sets out how KCC will meet this duty and what learners can expect by way of support.
- 3.3 KCC consulted with current and future service users between 25 January and 21 March 2023 on a Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023/24, stating that no changes were proposed for this year. It should be noted that this consultation also included proposals for changes to the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2024/25 and a formalisation of Kent's 4 – 16 Free School Transport Policy for 2024/25. Analysis of responses to these elements of the consultation are currently underway and a separate paper will be presented to CYPE Cabinet Committee in July to determine those proposals. However, it was necessary to consider the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 earlier to fulfil our statutory responsibilities for annual review.
- 3.4 The policy is attached as Appendix A.
- 3.5 A copy of the consultation documentation including Equality Impact Assessments can be found at www.kent.gov.uk/post16transport

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The scheme is uncapped and costs will vary depending on take up levels and journeys undertaken by cardholders, and so the overall costs of the scheme can vary year to year. In the financial year 2022-23, the cost of the post 16+ KTS was £2.7m of which £2.5m was funded from the recharge of the pass. The remaining subsidy of £0.3m is met from the revenue budget. The 2023-24 MTFP includes savings from increasing the KTS 16+ pass cost from September 2023 however, following confirmation of the Bus Subsidy Implementation Plan for 2023-24, these increases are expected to be delayed with costs covered by grant funding (as outlined in Key Decision 23/00027). In addition, the Home to school transport revenue budget also subsidises the Post 16 SEN Transport offer. This numbers fluctuate from year to year, but the total subsidy is around £10 million per annum.

5. Consultation outcomes

5.1 To raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, the following activity was undertaken:

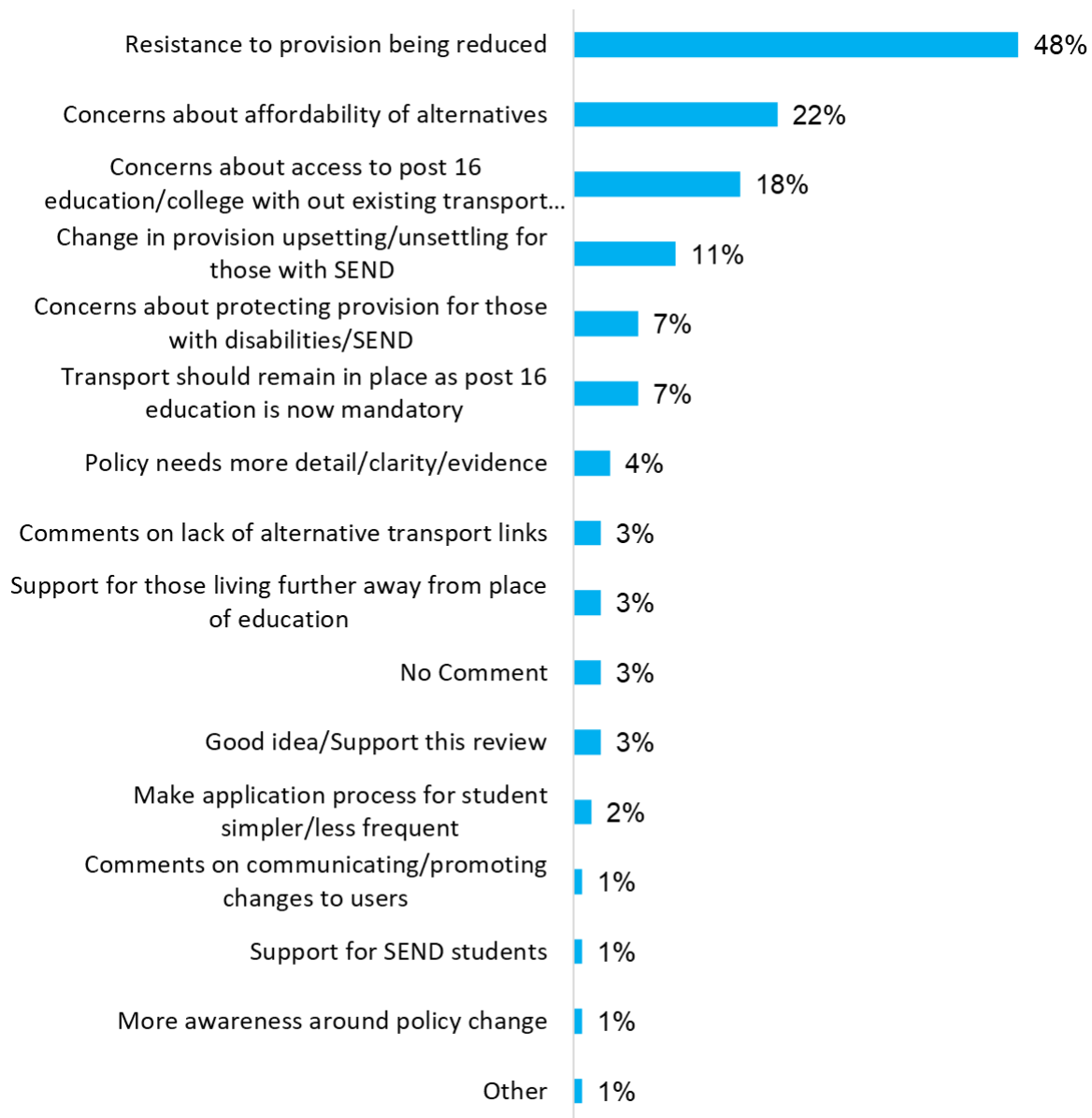
- Emails to stakeholders including head teachers, FE providers, bus operators and other school transport providers, such as taxis.
- Email/letter to all parents of year 10, 11 and post 16 students with an EHCP.
- Invite on the launch of the consultation to 8,957 Let's talk Kent registered users who have expressed an interest in being kept informed of consultation regarding transport, education, young people and children and families and a reminder email to 9,480 users on 13 March.
- Media release - <https://news.kent.gov.uk/articles/consultation-opens-on-kccs-home-to-school-transport-policy>
- Reviewed consultation materials and policy with Kent PACT and developed parental engagement strategy through their communication channels.
- Promoted by Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) through their newsletter, website and Facebook page.
- Promoted through KCC's resident e-newsletter, SEND newsletter and Kelsi e-bulletin and intranet.
- Posters provided to bus operators to display on buses.
- Posters displayed in libraries and Gateways and feature on home screen of public computers in libraries.
- Promotional banners added to Kent.gov homepage and relevant service pages.
- Social media via KCC's corporate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Nextdoor accounts and paid targeted Facebook adverts.
- Promotion through KCC's intranet.
- All consultation material included details of how people could contact KCC to ask a question, request hard copies or alternative format.
- A Word version of the questionnaire was provided on the consultation webpage for people who did not wish to complete the online version. A Freepost address was provided for any hard copy responses.
- Large print, easy read and audio versions of the consultation material were available from the consultation webpage and on request.

5.2 Engagement with the consultation webpage, material and social media:

- 7,510 visits to the consultation webpage, by 6,748 visitors.
- 2,018 document downloads, including 1,219 downloads of the Consultation Document
- 192 downloads of the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023-24
- Organic posts had a reach of 21,531 on Facebook and 939 on Instagram. There were 8,572 impressions on Twitter and 1,242 on LinkedIn. Reach refers to the number of people who saw a post at least once and impressions are the number of times the post is displayed on someone's screen. The posts generated approximately 760 clicks through to the consultation webpage. (Not all social media platforms report the same statistics.)
- Paid Facebook advertising had a reach of 27,320, which resulted in 784 clicks on the link to consultation webpage. Post impressions totalled 115,730.

- 89 responses to 2023-24 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement sections of the consultation

5.3 As outlined above, whilst no changes are being proposed for the 2023-24 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement, KCC is legally required to consult every year. Among those who commented on the 2023-24 policy, just under half (48%) stated resistance to provisions being reduced. These responses are likely to have been influenced by proposals elsewhere in the consultation for the 2024/25 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement, which will be considered in detail in CYPE Cabinet Committee in July before any decisions around proposals are made. Over a fifth (22%) stated concerns around the affordability of transport alternatives. Responses have been summarised into the following categories:



6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish by 31 May each year an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or otherwise that the authority considers necessary, to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 Post 16 Transport Policy has an overall positive impact for learners with protected characteristics, with little to no negative effects. The document and consultation information can be found via www.kent.gov.uk/schooltransportpolicy

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Given the stable nature of Kent's Post 16 transport offer for 2023/24 academic year, which exceeds its statutory duties in a number of areas the Cabinet Member is asked to endorse the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24

8. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member is asked to agree to the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2023/24.

9. Background Documents

- Post 16 Transport Policy – Appendix A
- Consultation documents
www.kent.gov.uk/post16transport10

10. Contact details

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