

Details of the consultation on proposals to change the discretionary elements of home to school transport provision

During the period 21 March 2011 to 6 May 2011 consultation has taken place with:

- Parents (the consultation has been promoted by various means, including by schools, local community groups, Children's Centres, the Children's Disability Teams, the KCC web-site and the parenting e-brief)
- Kent schools, academies and FE colleges
- Diocesan Boards
- Chief Executives of District and Borough Councils in Kent and neighbouring Local Authorities
- Kent MPs and KCC elected Members
- Kent Children's Trust
- KCC officers
- KCC Staff Equality Groups (these groups represent the equality strands of age, disability, race, sexual orientation and transgender)
- Kent Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education
- Kent Youth County Council

Responses to the consultation

A total of 1,256 responses to the consultation were received.

88% of respondents did not agree with the proposal to remove discretionary home to school transport. 11% agreed with the proposal, and 2% did not provide an answer¹.

80% of respondents agreed that pupils already receiving discretionary home to school transport should continue to be provided with free transport. 16% disagreed with this proposal, and 4% did not provide an answer.

Response themes

Comments on the proposals:

- 33% were concerned that the proposals added to financial hardship for families.
- 25% considered the proposals unfair in a local authority that operates a selective system.
- 17% made reference to the Kent Freedom Pass and about half of these comments were concerned about the increase of the pass to £100 and the possibility of future increases.
- 14% made particular reference to the unfairness of the proposals for families of religious faith.
- 8% commented that the proposals would lead to increased congestion and pollution.

¹ Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding

- 7% thought the proposals were contrary to parental choice in general.
- 6% were concerned about the loss of dedicated transport.

Comments on vulnerable groups

About half of the respondents comments on particular groups they thought should be given special consideration, these were:

- All children and families (11%)
- Low income families (7%)
- Looked after children and foster children (6%)
- Young carers (5%)
- Children with disabilities (4%)
- Children attending faith schools (4%)

Comments from the Dioceses

All our Diocesan partners strongly opposed the removal of the discretionary provisions. Their opposition was based on the view that it would restrict choice by families for a school based on religion and belief. Both Southwark and Canterbury Diocese made particular reference to the partnership arrangements to work collaboratively, and support the LA, to provide school places in Kent. Canterbury Diocese was also concerned about the removal of discretionary transport to selective schools. The comments from the Dioceses also reflect concerns for transport considerations and the impact on particular groups (e.g. those on low income or in rural areas). Canterbury Diocese also made particular reference to:

- Those dependent on Trains.
- Families with 3 or more children at school.

Profile of those responding

82% were from parents; 5% were from pupils; 8% were from a member of school staff or school governor and 4% were from other groups, 2% did not state who they were² Those from other groups included responses from the Archdiocese of Southwark, Canterbury Diocese, Rochester Diocesan Board of Education and a Catholic Priest.

73% of respondents provided a valid postcode and this has been used to give a Mosaic profile. While the results of this analysis are only partial they show that the groups K&M 1, K&M 4 and K&M 11 are over represented compared to the Kent population. This reflects some of the most affluent segments of the population, and for K&M 11, a number of people living in rural communities. Those segments on lower or comfortable incomes are under –represented in terms of consultation responses.

² Figures do not add up to 100% due to rounding