Consultation on Post 16 Transport Policy for 2011/12

‘Putting children and young people first in Dudley’

9th May 2011

Jane Porter
Interim Director of Children’s Services

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Directorate of Children’s Services
Westox House
1 Trinity Road
Dudley
West Midlands DY1 1JQ
Consultation Document

Consultation on: Consultation on changes to the Post 16 Home-to-School/College Transport Policy for September 2011

Summary: To inform and consult on proposed changes to the Post 16 Home-to-School/College Transport Policy to be applied from the start of term September 2011:

- The introduction of a new charge for travel to college or 6th form in a taxi or specialist vehicle. The proposed charge will be £500.00 for an academic year which will be reduced to £300.00 for low income families.
- A greater emphasis has been placed on the importance of independent travel and independent travel training.
- The Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team are now responsible for assessing entitlement for travel to college or 6th form by specialist vehicle (taxi/minibus).
- The offer of mileage allowance to families with Motability or other vehicles to facilitate travel to college or 6th form by parents or carers.
- The deletion of references to EMA although some students will continue to receive this in the coming academic year.
- Amended references to the Connexions Service which has now become part of the Council.
- Students travelling to a course outside of the West Midlands will be required to fund the equivalent cost of a Centro travel pass before any assistance towards the cost of travel is considered.

Deadline: All responses must be received by Thursday 21st July 2011

Public Access

Consultations, plans and policies will be published as follows:

Public Libraries
Dudley MBC website www.dudley.gov.uk
Westox House
Responses to: CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Executive Support Team
Directorate of Children’s Services
Westox House
1 Trinity Road
Dudley DY1 1JQ
director.children@dudley.gov.uk

Your responses will be co-ordinated by this team.
Any responses will be provided by the appropriate responsible officer for this consultation.

All responses may be published. A large print version, and translation into other languages is available on request to the above address.

Jane Porter
Interim Director of Children’s Services
Consultees:

5K Foundation Limited
African Caribbean Community Network
Alzheimer’s Society
Aquarius
Bangladeshi Development Group
Beacon Centre for the Blind
Black Country Chamber of Commerce
Brierley Hill Asian Welfare and Cultural Association
Cancer Support
Central Mediation Services
Centre for Equality & Diversity
Chairs of Governors
Children’s Centres
Children’s Trust Executive Board
Church of St Augustine of Hippo
Community Centres
Councillors
Crossroads Care Dudley
Directorate Staff
Dudley and Netherton Methodist Church
Dudley Asian Women’s Centre
Dudley Association of Governing Bodies
Dudley Borough Churches Forum
Dudley Borough Interfaith Network
Dudley Carribean & Friends Association
Dudley Central Mosque and Muslim Community Centre
Dudley Community Partnership
Dudley Council Directates
Dudley Council for Voluntary Service
Dudley Group of Hospitals
Dudley Mind
Dudley Muslim Association
Dudley Parent Partnership
Dudley Primary Care Trust
Dudley Safeguarding Children’s Board
Dudley Social Business Partnership
Dudley Stroke Association
Dudley Voices for Choice
Fens Pool Voluntary Association
Green Light Muslim Youth Forum
High Oak Youth Group
Langstone Society
Methodist Church
Millennium Volunteers
Oscar Sandwell
Sandwell Advocacy
Sandwell Crossroads
Shell Corner Partnership
St. James’s Church
The Golden Years Club

Action for Children
Action for Disabled People and Carers
Barnardos
Brierley Hill Community Forum
Castle & Priory Regeneration Board
Children Young People and Families Group
Connexions
DOSTI
Dudley Federation of Tenants & Residents Associations
Dudley Local Involvement Network (LINK)
Dudley Muslim Forum
Dudley Voluntary Learning Network
Dudley Voluntary Youth Organisations
Dudley Women’s Forum
Education Business Partnership
Energy & Waste Pollution Working Group
engAGING
Further Education Colleges
Green Spaces Forum
Headteachers
Kashmiri Pakistani Professionals
Forum
Libraries
Local Admissions Forum
Members of Parliament
Neighbouring Local Authorities
Directors of Children’s Services
North Dudley Neighbourhood Watch Association
Probation Service
Roman Catholic Diocesan Schools Commission
Select Committee for Children’s Services
Skills Funding Agency
Small Groups Network
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE)
Strategic Health Authority
UK Islamic Mission
Unions and Professional Associations
Voluntary Sector Network
West Midlands Consortium Service for Travelling Children, Schools and Families (WMCESTC)
West Midlands Fire Service
West Midlands Police
Worcester Diocesan Board of Education
Young Peoples Learning Agency
Youth Centres
Dudley College students / parents
The Council has a statutory duty to consult on the Post 16 Home-to-School/College Transport Policy before it is published each year. Included in the consultation for the academic year 2011/12 are details of changes to roles and responsibilities for assessing entitlement and a key proposal to introduce a charge for the provision of a taxi or minibus should this be needed to facilitate attendance for students aged 16 to 19 who are covered by the policy.

The aim of the consultation is to establish if the proposed introduction of a charge is considered fair and equitable.

Responses to the consultation will be analysed and used to inform the decision making process prior to the Home-to-School/College Post 16 Transport Policy becoming an official policy document.

The consultation is aimed primarily at those current and future students and families who will be affected by the introduction of a charge. The wider community is also included so that all stakeholders have an opportunity to express their opinion on the proposed changes.

Consultees will be provided with access to the proposed Home-to-School/College Post 16 Transport Policy. A list of frequently asked questions (FAQ’s) that summarise the changes proposed for the 2011/12 policy is attached to this document.

Data from the consultation will be analysed to establish the level of support or opposition to the proposed policy changes.

Data will also be used to evaluate and publish a level 2 Equalities Impact Assessment to establish the effects Council policies have, or are likely to have, on different groups or communities.

The outcome of the consultation will be evaluated by a panel of Councillors and Chief Officers.

The outcome of the consultation will be published on the Dudley MBC web site.
What are the main changes to the Post 16 Transport Policy for 2011/12?

The main changes to policy for the 2011/12 academic year are:

- The introduction of a new charge for travel to college or 6th form in a taxi or specialist vehicle. The proposed charge will be £500.00 for an academic year which will be reduced to £300.00 for low income families.
- A greater emphasis has been placed on the importance of independent travel and independent travel training.
• The Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team are now responsible for assessing entitlement for travel to college or 6th form by specialist vehicle (taxi/minibus).
• The offer of mileage allowance to families with motability vehicles to facilitate travel to college or 6th form by parents or carers.
• The deletion of references to EMA although some students will continue to receive this in the coming academic year.
• Amended references to the Connexions Service which has now become part of the Council.
• The Children’s Services Travel & Transport Team will take on responsibility for providing advice and guidance on financial support available to assist with travel costs.
• Students travelling to a course outside of the West Midlands will be required to fund the equivalent cost of a Centro travel pass before any assistance towards the cost of travel is considered.

What defines a low income family?

A low income family is one that receives the same benefits used to assess entitlement for free school meals. These are:

• Income Support
• income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
• income-related Employment and Support Allowance
• support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
• the Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
• Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
• Young people who receive Income Support or income-based Job Seeker’s Allowance in their own right qualify as well.

Why have the charges been introduced?

The charges have been introduced because the cost of providing a specialist taxi or minibus is very expensive and can no longer be provided free of charge. The introduction of a charge will ensure that, in the long term, the service can be maintained.

I have a disability that means I cannot walk to college or use public transport – will I get help with travel?

As long as you have applied for a place at the nearest college, 6th form or learning provider that can provide the qualification and meet accessibility needs then you would qualify for support with travel. This may be in the form of:
• If you have access to a family vehicle then a mileage allowance would be offered.
• If you need a specialist vehicle or taxi then the Council would arrange this if you have agreed the payment of an annual charge of £500 or £300.

Note: some learning providers offer places on their own minibus for students with a disability and this would be investigated at the time of application.

**With the introduction of the new charges how am I supposed to find the money to pay for transport?**

From September a new 16-19 bursary scheme has been introduced for the most vulnerable students. Young people in care, care leavers and those on income support will be eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200.00. Schools, Colleges and learning providers are also able to provide smaller bursaries to any student who faces genuine financial barriers to staying on in education and training to help with costs such as transport, food or equipment. The Council will work closely with schools, colleges and learning providers to ensure that those facing genuine hardship by the introduction of charges have access to financial support offered by the bursary and are only charged the reduced rate for travel.

**I am a single parent and need help with getting my son/daughter to college in September – what help will I get?**

You may qualify for help under the bursary scheme outlined above. You may also be able to access discretionary schemes run by the college such as a place on a free bus service or independent travel training. In all cases like this you should contact the Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team to discuss the level of support available.

**I want to attend the same college as my friends but this is further away than my local college which provides the same qualification – will I get help with travel costs?**

• The Post 16 Transport Policy has historically confined support with travel costs to eligible students if they are attending the nearest provider capable of offering the qualification. Most students fund the cost of their own travel pass or access bus routes set up by the college and are unaffected by the Post 16 Transport Policy because the cost of a student travel pass is standardised throughout the West Midlands.

• Students requiring a specialist taxi or minibus will only be offered additional support with travel if they have chosen to attend the nearest school, college or learning provider that can provide the qualification and meet accessibility needs. This means that we are unable to offer transport support if the reason for the request is that you have friends attending a college further away.
Dudley Connexions Service will advise prospective students with a moving forward plan on what travel support they can expect to receive when considering their course options.

**I want to change courses mid-term because the course I have chosen is not the right one for me – will my travel support remain in place?**

All requests for travel support are considered individually. Changing courses mid-term would not be a reason to stop travel support as long as the general principals of the policy are still being met.

**Is independent travel training available before I start college or 6th form?**

Independent Travel Training is available for all Dudley children from year 10 onwards. Young people and their families are encouraged to consider travel training as early as possible. Many children qualifying for free travel to school on a taxi or minibus may not get the same offer of support to attend college or 6th form. If you would like to know more about travel training then you should discuss this with your school or contact the Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team on 01384 811583.

**How can I apply for a mileage allowance and what are the criteria for getting it?**

Mileage allowance will be discussed when your application for travel is received by the Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team. For an offer to be made you would need to be attending your nearest school, college or learning provider who can deliver the qualification and be unable to access the course by walking or the use of public transport.

**Who should I contact if I want to discuss travel to 6th form or college?**

- Bus passes, college coaches and walking routes – contact your college, 6th form or learning provider.
- Taxi, minibus, mileage allowance, travel training or travelling out of borough – the Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team.
- If you have a Connexions Advisor they can also provide information on travel and transport support available.

**The nearest college providing the qualification is in Worcester – I cannot use a Centro pass to get there what help will I get with travel costs?**

If this is the nearest provider of the qualification then an offer of support would be made once the value of a Centro travel pass has been deducted from the cost of travel to Worcester.
I will be starting the second year of my course in September. I have not been expected to pay in 2010/11 will I have to pay in 2011/12?

All students accessing their course by taxi or specialist vehicle will be expected to pay from September 2011. The bursary scheme will be available should the introduction of charges cause financial hardship.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact:

The Children’s Services Travel and Transport Team
Directorate of Children’s Services
Westox House
1 Trinity Road
Dudley
DY1 1JQ 01384 814254
Comments on the consultation for Post 16 Transport Policy

Please return this form to:

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Westox House
1 Trinity Road
Dudley
West Midlands DY1 1JQ

Email: director.children@dudley.gov.uk
Fax: 01384 814202

Name: ……………………………… Organisation: ………………………………………

If you wish to receive an acknowledgement of receipt for your response please provide an email or postal address:

Contact address ……………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………………………

1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to Post 16 Transport Policy and the introduction of a charge for students who travel in a taxi or specialist vehicle?

   Yes   No   No opinion

Comments
Customer Service feedback on the consultation for Post 16 Transport Policy

We are grateful to your comments on the consultation.

To help us ensure that our community engagement and consultation process is working correctly and effectively we would be grateful if you would respond to the questions below and return with your consultation response.

Thank you for your help.

1. Did you find the information about community engagement easy to understand?
   Yes □  No □

4. Was the consultation document and any appendices easy to understand?
   Yes □  No □

5. If applicable, were the staff who dealt with your enquiry polite, friendly and helpful?
   Yes □  No □

6. Were you satisfied with the overall process?
   Yes □  No □

7. Do you have any further comments to make about the Council’s Community Engagement and Consultation Process?
Equality monitoring of DMBC consultations

The information you give on this form will be used to enable Dudley Council to assess the impact of its policies on all sections of the community.

The details you provide will be treated confidentially and will be used to ensure that the views of a wide range of groups and individuals are included in the consultation process and given the opportunity to shape Council policies.

If you are completing this form on behalf of an organisation please try to answer the questions in general terms about the people your organisation represents.

1. Please indicate whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation:
   - Individuals response
   - Organisations response

2. I would describe my ethnic group, or the ethnic group/s represented by my organisation as:

   **ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH**
   - Bangladeshi
   - Indian
   - Pakistani
   - Any Other Asian background

   **BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH**
   - African
   - Caribbean
   - Any Other Black Background

   **CHINESE OR OTHER**
   - Chinese
   - Other

   **MIXED**
   - Asian & White
   - Black African & White
   - Black Caribbean & White
   - Any Other Mixed background

   **WHITE**
   - British
   - Irish
   - Any Other White Background

   **RANGE OF ETHNICITIES**
   - (Space for additional comments)
3. I would describe my religion/belief or the religion/beliefs of the people represented by my organisation as:

- Buddhist
- No Religion
- Christian
- Sikh
- Hindu
- Other
- Jewish
- A range of religions/beliefs
- Muslim
- Unknown

4. My gender or the gender of the people my organisation represents is:

- Female
- Male
- Mixed

5. My age or the age range of the people my organisation represents is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under 5 years old</th>
<th>26 – 35 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 – 10 years old</td>
<td>36 – 45 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 16 years old</td>
<td>46 – 55 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 19 years old</td>
<td>Over 56 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 25 years old</td>
<td>A range of ages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. I consider myself or many of the people my organisation represents to be:

- Disabled
- Not disabled

Note:
The Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 defines a “disabled person” as having “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

Thank you for completing this form.

Please return this form with your consultation response.