

Consultation on changes to the Transport
Policy for Children and Young People with
Special Educational Needs
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1. Introduction

Lancashire County Council is proposing to make changes to the transport policy for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

It is proposed that the county council:

- introduces a parental contribution for discretionary Post 16 transport support of £475 per annum with effect from September 2014; and
- applies a formulaic increase to future years' concessionary charge that is on the basis of Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 5%.

The proposed changes would ensure that transport provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can continue to be provided in a transparent, supportive and cost-effective way for families.

It is proposed that the changes will be introduced from September 2014.

The county council conducted a consultation to hear the views of affected groups on these important proposals.

2. Methodology

The consultation ran from 3 February to 25 April 2014. A document explaining the proposed changes, a cover letter explaining the consultation and a questionnaire asking for views on the proposed changes was sent to 2,587 parents/guardians of children and young people currently in receipt of SEN or college transport. The consultation documents were also emailed to the following groups:

- neighbouring local authorities;
- independent non-maintained schools;
- Lancashire schools;
- Lancashire colleges;
- Barnardos;
- Welfare Rights;
- Parent Carer Forum;
- Lancashire Youth Council; and
- Family Information Service

The consultation was also available online to any other interested parties through the Lancashire County Council 'Have your say' website:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/haveyoursay.

In total 634 questionnaires were returned, 313 paper copies and 321 online copies.

1.1. Limitations

Although the survey was available for anyone to respond to, the aim of the consultation was to gain the views of those who will be affected by the changes and so the responses should not be seen as the view of the overall Lancashire population.

For each question in the survey, comparisons have been made between different sub-groups of respondents (different areas and different types of respondent eg parent/guardian, school employee) to look for statistically significant differences in opinion. No statistically valid differences between sub-groups were found.

In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

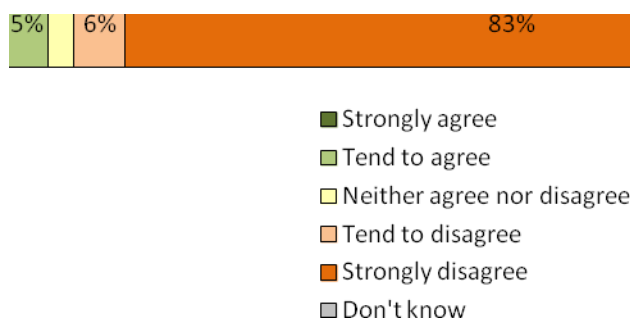
3. Main research findings

1.2. Parental contribution

It is proposed that the county council introduces a parental contribution for discretionary Post 16 transport support of £475 per annum with effect from September 2014. To mitigate the impact of the financial contribution it is proposed that Post 16 SEND students from low income families (defined by entitlement to free school meals or parents/carers in receipt of maximum levels of working tax credit) would be exempt from the charge.

Respondents to the consultation were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with this proposal. Over four-fifths of respondents (83%) strongly disagree with the proposal.

Chart 1 - It is proposed that the county council introduces a parental contribution for discretionary Post 16 transport support of £475 per annum with effect from September 2014. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Base: all respondents (631)

1.3. Annual increase of charge

It is proposed that the county council applies a formulaic increase to future years' concessionary charge that is on the basis of Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 5%.

Respondents were asked how strongly they agree or disagree with this proposal. Four-fifths of respondents strongly disagree (81%) with this proposal.

Chart 2 - It is proposed that the county council applies a formulaic increase to future years' concessionary charge that is on the basis of the Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 5%. How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



Base: all respondents (624)

1.4. Respondent comments

Respondents were asked if they would like to give reasons for their responses to the questions and were given a space to write their reasons in. 449 respondents (71%) chose to give a reason. Responses to this question were categorised and the table below shows the most common categories of response.

The full comments made have been made available to the team working on the proposal.

Reason	Count	Percentage
Can't/won't be able to afford to pay for transport to and from school for child/children	102	23%
Other	47	10%
Lack of provision leads to children travelling further to schools/colleges	46	10%
A lot of people won't be able to afford these charges	43	9%
The charge prohibits children and young people from attending school/college of their choice/may stop them going altogether	42	9%
Transport provided is essential/needed as cannot make other arrangements	40	9%
The charge is unfair	39	9%
The charge may lead to financial hardship within families/could cause difficulties	38	9%
Not fair to parents of disabled children as they already have more costs/hardship than other parents	36	8%
The proposed rate of increase (RPI+5%) is too harsh	27	6%
The working sector are hit harder financially because not on benefits	24	5%
Transport services should be provided for free	20	5%
There are other areas which can be considered for cuts	18	4%
The proposed charge for transport is too expensive	18	4%
Children with SEND need all the help they can get	17	4%
Pupils with SEND should pay the same as non-SEND pupils	14	3%
Children could become isolated from a decreased social life	12	3%
It is not unreasonable to ask for a contribution	12	3%

If education is compulsory until aged 18 then costs should be funded up to that age	7	2%
Proposed charges should be based on income	5	1%
Charge should be means tested or stay the same	4	1%
The proposed charge is a tax on disability	4	1%
Disability/mobility allowance should be used to pay for the transport	3	1%
Parents may consider lowering hours to claim benefits and free transport	2	0%

1.5. Extended responses

A number of responses were made by letter to the consultation. The full responses have been made available to the team working on the proposal. In summary, these were as follows:

- Letter from Mark Hendrick MP on behalf of Cardinal Newman College expressing concern that a number of pupils would have to change colleges mid way through their course and that asking students to attend their nearest college would remove their right to a choice of education provider.
- An issue from a member of the public raised through the online compliments, comments and complaints form that, as the consultation requests only one response per household, a number of people's views are being discounted (eg both parents of a young person with SEND and the young person themselves).
- An email response from Runshaw College making a number of suggestions:
 - That distance travelled and level of disability be considered when setting the fee
 - Providing travel training for those with less complex needs
 - Asking colleges for their assessment of which students need taxi provision
 - Giving sufficient time for students to make an informed choice about which college to attend given transport arrangements
 - Concern that students may not have sufficient choice of college if they need to attend the nearest.

4. Profile of respondents

Respondents were asked to select from a number of options in what capacity they were responding to the consultation as. Respondents could select more than one group. The table below shows the distribution of respondents.

Group	Percentage	Count
A parent/guardian/carer of a pupil currently receiving transport support	89%	534
Other	9%	54
An employee or governor of a special school	5%	30
A parent/guardian/carer of a pupil not currently receiving transport support	2%	14
An employee or governor of a further education establishment	1%	7
An employee or governor of an independent, non-maintained special school	1%	5
An employee of another Local Authority (please specify)	1%	4
Total		603

Respondents were asked to give their postcode so that responses could be analysed by district. The table below shows the distribution of respondents across districts.

District	Percentage	Count
Response not given	15%	94
Blackburn	0%	3
Blackpool	0%	1
Burnley	5%	34
Chorley	7%	44
Fylde	4%	25
Hyndburn	7%	42
Lancaster	12%	74
Pendle	7%	46
Preston	9%	58
Ribble Valley	4%	27
Rosendale	6%	41
South Ribble	7%	47
West Lancashire	8%	50
Wyre	8%	48
Total		634

