

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<b>STRATEGY/ACTION:</b> Budget Proposal 18: Cessation of Post 16 Transport 19: Review of transport of pupils to Greenfields/Woodham Schools 23: Secondary School Transport	<b>Department:</b> Services for People
<b>Person responsible for assessment:</b> Jenni Cooke  <b>Person responsible for strategy where different from above:</b> Rachel Jones	<b>Date of assessment:</b> 5 December 2011 to February 6 <sup>th</sup> 2012

<b>Brief description of strategy, partners and those who will be affected by its delivery:</b>
<p><b>Proposal 18: Post 16 Transport</b> Removal of free Post 16 Transport proposes no financial contribution will be provided to those students over 16 attending either school or college, who currently receive it. The savings will amount to £49,000 but will be phased in so that current eligible students continue to receive the provision until the enrolled course of education is completed . Disabled pupils will continue to receive transport.</p> <p><b>Proposal 19: Secondary School transport to Woodham and Greenfields schools.</b> Currently 29 pupils are transported to these schools. The majority of these pupils live in rural areas of Darlington making it likely they would be entitled to free transport to a Darlington school. Savings will amount to £36,000 but will be phased in over 5 years.</p> <p><b>Proposal 23: Secondary School Transport Policy</b> The proposal is to amend the current Transport Policy for Darlington to align with the statutory requirements placed on local authorities. Darlington’s Secondary Home to School Transport policy is more generous than many in the country. Authorities must provide free transport if a pupil lives more than 3 miles away from the nearest school at which a place is available (there are some additional requirements on school preference for children from low income families), or if there is no safe walking from their home to a suitable school.</p>

**Brief description of strategy, partners and those who will be affected by its delivery:**

1. Extend the distance criteria to 3 miles for secondary school pupils
2. Remove the Associated Transport links for secondary schools
3. Remove 'faith' transport arrangements

Savings could be achieved as shown in the following table. The levels of any potential savings that could be realised during the term of The Medium Term Financial Plan if the Council were to continue providing transport to meet the statutory minimum requirements only and were to discontinue all other transport provision.

Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
0	79,000	177,500	252,000	311,500	381,500

**Conclusion**

If the transport distance was expanded to three miles, and faith transport was phased out, a total saving of **£381,500** is potentially available. The figure is dependent on the current demographics and allocation of school places remaining constant.

The impacts identified as part of this assessment have been gathered from the initial high level assessment which informed whether further equalities impact assessment and/or disability impact assessments were to be undertaken. From this initial assessment the decision was taken to carry out a generic equalities impact assessment of the three transport proposals thus collating any cumulative impacts of the three proposals.

## Introduction

This is a generic document that will require interpretation in particular circumstances. If, after reading the guidance, you require further information on how to implement the assessment, please contact Peter Roberts, Social Enterprise Development Manager 01325 388713

**Q.1 Is your strategy and the actions it proposes accessible to everyone within the community? Bear in mind any economic, social, environmental, physical, intellectual, cultural, linguistic, technological or other barriers.**

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
<b>Equality Act 2010 Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age	✓		Pupils currently attending secondary schools and receive transport provided by the local authority will continue to do so until they complete their secondary education. Students currently receiving post 16 transport will continue to do so until the end of the period of study.	Proposal 23 directly affects pupils who will be starting school in September 2013 i.e. aged 11 by 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2013. Proposal 18 affects post 16 pupils attending FE establishments (newly enrolled on courses of study).
Disability	✓		Disabled pupils assessed as requiring transport to school are not affected by these proposals.	
Gender reassignment		✓	N/A	
Pregnancy and Maternity		✓	N/A	
Race		✓	N/A	

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Religion or belief	✓		Currently Catholic pupils choosing a Roman Catholic education receive free transport to the only RC school in the borough – Carmel College.	Baptised Catholic pupils of secondary school age attending a faith school will no longer receive free transport from the local authority unless they are eligible through other criteria. The proposal directly affects pupils who will be starting school in September 2013 i.e. aged 11 by 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2013.
Sex		✓	N/A	
Sexual orientation		✓	N/A	
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓	N/A	
<b>Local Priorities:</b>				
Geographical impacts	✓		<p>The transport proposals will impact on those pupils living in rural locations who would have received free transport a school within the urban area on the basis of Associated Transport. For example, pupils who live in Heighington Village are associated with Hummersknott Academy would receive free transport to the school under the current rules. If the proposals go ahead they would only be eligible for transport to their nearest appropriate school which in the case of Heighington would be Darlington School of Maths and Science.</p> <p><b>Proposal 18</b> post 16 transport will be disproportionately affected not only by the removal of the free transport but also by the cumulative impacts of the reduction in supported bus routes.</p>	<p>The removal of Associated Transport association to particular secondary schools has been highlighted as a significant impact for pupils and their families. Reduced choice of school for parents/carers and pupils.</p> <p>Changes to the demography of villages currently attracting parents because of the links to specific secondary schools in Darlington.</p> <p>Academies have their own admissions policies.</p>

Issue	Yes	No	If yes, what evidence do you have to demonstrate this?	If no, what do you plan to do to remove barriers to access?
Carers		✓	In this context carers refers to those carrying out 'caring responsibilities' within the definition prescribed within social care and requiring a subsequent assessment under legislation. In terms of this impact assessment the term carers is used in its educational context of parents/carers of children or young people.	
Young People leaving care		✓		
Gypsy & Traveller		✓		
Refugees & Asylum Seekers		✓		
Unemployed or low income	✓		Potential negative impact on low income families who fall just below the threshold for maximum Working Families' Tax Credit and do not receive free school meals which would entitle them to free transport to their nearest appropriate school over <b>two</b> miles. Impact of reduced attendance by pupils whose parents/carers cannot afford to pay transport costs.	
People with spent criminal convictions		✓		

**Q.2 (a) For whatever reason, does your strategy and the actions it proposes treat any group differently from others?**

Yes	✓
No	

**If you have answered 'yes', please specify those individuals or groups affected and whether the impact has the potential to be adverse.**

The proposal will impact disproportionately Roman Catholic pupils and their families as these pupils will no longer be able to access free transport to their nearest faith school. Pupils who will be living further than two miles but less than three miles from their appropriate school will no longer be eligible for transport from implementation of the proposal i.e. September 2013

**(b) What needs to be done to prevent any potentially adverse impact?**

Consideration has been given to reviewing the School Transport service in conjunction with schools and communities. Any such proposals will consider means to reduce congestion and support safe travel to schools.

**Q.3 (a) Does your strategy promote equality? (e.g. does it contain actions that demonstrate a consideration of community cohesion and the needs of the members of Darlington's diverse communities)**

Yes	✓
No	

**If you have answered 'yes', please give examples of how equality is promoted.**

The proposal places the School Transport Policy in line with minimum legislative requirements. The provision in Darlington has been more generous in the past allowing free transport for secondary school pupils living more than two miles from their school rather than the designated three miles in the legislation. There is no change to the provision for primary phase pupils who receive transport provision better than the legislative minimum standards.

**Q.4 In the past three years, have you consulted with any of the following groups regarding the development of your strategy?**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>If yes, please summarise evidence (Who? When? What were the outcomes?)</b>	<b>If no, are you satisfied that the strategy has no impact on this group?</b>
Age	✓		Consultation sessions have been undertaken with the general population as part of the generic budget consultation. Specific sessions were arranged for young people and their families to discuss all the budget proposals. Following feedback from the public, officers arranged 1:1 appointments for parents/carers to discuss the impacts of the proposals on them individually.	
Disability	✓		Consultation sessions have been undertaken with the general population as part of the generic budget consultation. Specific sessions were arranged for young people and their families to discuss all the budget proposals. These generic sessions included a specific session for disabled people. No specific issues were raised regarding school transport for disabled children. It should be noted that these specific proposals do not affect those pupils assessed as requiring transport as part of their SEN assessment.	
Gender reassignment		✓	N/A	
Pregnancy and Maternity		✓	N/A	
Race		✓	N/A	

Group	Yes	No	If yes, please summarise evidence (Who? When? What were the outcomes?)	If no, are you satisfied that the strategy has no impact on this group?
Religion or belief	✓		<p>Consultation sessions have been undertaken with the general population as part of the generic budget consultation. Specific sessions were arranged for young people and their families to discuss all the budget proposals. Following feedback from the public, officers arranged 1:1 appointments for parents/carers to discuss the impacts of the proposals on them individually. The transport proposals have a direct impact on those pupils opting for a Roman Catholic education at Carmel College. Over 1500 written responses have been received from parents/carers outlining their opposition to the proposals. The key issues raised by these letters are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposal re transport disproportional impacts adversely on parents on faith and socio-economic grounds</li> <li>▪ Savings seems small in relation to high level of disruption</li> <li>▪ Will impact on parents of deprived children who attend Carmel</li> <li>▪ Over 30% pupils are non catholic in line with the Admissions Policy</li> <li>▪ Some children will qualify for transport post 3 miles but Catholic children will not</li> </ul>	
Sex		✓	N/A	No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)
Sexual orientation		✓	N/A	No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)



Group	Yes	No	If yes, please summarise evidence (Who? When? What were the outcomes?)	If no, are you satisfied that the strategy has no impact on this group?
Marriage and Civil Partnership		✓	N/A	No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)
Geographical impacts	✓		<p>Consultation sessions have been undertaken with the general population as part of the generic budget consultation. Specific sessions were arranged for young people and their families to discuss all the budget proposals.</p> <p>Following feedback from the public, officers arranged 1:1 appointments for parents/carers to discuss the impacts of the proposals on them individually.</p>	
Carers		✓		
Young people leaving care		✓		No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)
Gypsy & Traveller		✓		No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)
Refugees & asylum seekers		✓		No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)

Group	Yes	No	If yes, please summarise evidence (Who? When? What were the outcomes?)	If no, are you satisfied that the strategy has no impact on this group?
Unemployed or low waged	✓		As part of the equality impact assessment processes, those families who are unemployed or low waged were identified as at risk of significant impacts from the changes to Secondary School Transport. Following feedback from the public, officers arranged 1:1 appointments for parents/carers to discuss the impacts of the proposals on them individually.	
People with spent criminal convictions		✓		No specific issues in addition to the general population of young people (see AGE above)

**Additional Equality Impact Assessment Information:**

To understand and gather information about impacts from the general public, parents and carers, and schools a series of events have been held as well as direct discussions with schools and individual parents about the impacts they anticipate from the proposed changes to the transport policy.

**A series of public events were held during December 2011 and January 2012. These included:**

- December 5, 2011 – general public meeting
- December 9, 2011 – public meeting for disabled people
- December 12, 2011 – public meeting for older people
- January 7, 2012– public meeting for children and young people, and their families
- January 16, 2012 – meeting at St George’s CE Primary School for parents/carers
- January 17, 2012 – general public meeting Dolphin Centre
- January 19, 2012 – surgery for parents/carers by appointment at Town Hall
- January 25, 2012 – public meeting at Heighington CE Primary School for parents/carers

In addition to these public meetings parents were invited to make individual appointments with staff from the School Place Planning team to discuss the implications of the proposals and gather their individual impacts.

### **Impacts identified during consultation sessions and received by letter, email or via Elected Members:**

The primary of concern from the majority of those participating in the sessions or providing information was the reduced choice of school their child/children could attend and maintain free transport under the Policy. Several parents stated:

- 'we moved here because my child would attend Hummersknott school'
- 'want him to attend a Catholic school and effectively taking choice out of it'
- 'do not want to send my child to a "struggling school" [DSMS]
- 'parents cannot be in two places at once'
- 'safety of children walking long distances in the dark'
- 'increased pollution'
- 'more cars on the roads around the school – increased traffic congestion'
- 'destroying village life, young families won't move here if they can't get the school of their choice'

The impacts identified above are a summary of the common themes emerging from the submissions. The Council received over 1,500 duplicate letters from parents raising concerns about the removal of **Faith transport** for Roman Catholic pupils wishing to attend Carmel College from various areas of the town. A DVD has been produced by Carmel College outlining the impacts identified by the Academy in terms of school choice and social cohesion, traffic congestion, environmental implications of increased car traffic and costs to parents. **The DVD is available for decision-makers to view.**

**Post 16 Transport** – impacts have been identified by young people as follows:

- Unable to afford to go to college
- Reduction in employment prospects
- Travelling to Middlesbrough would be unaffordable. Couldn't buy books.
- Personal Safety – if walking 'I may get attacked'

### **Future Options:**

There is work ongoing with schools to build a model of transport provision for the future which will support schools, parents or groups to make provision for transport. This work will continue to support a model which will aim to provide a commercially viable provision where there is no statutory provision in the future.

The proposal will not become operational until September 2013, which affects those pupils applying for a school place in 2012-13. Schools have chosen to review their own admissions policies to ensure that links which currently relate to Associated Transport are clearly defined for school admissions purposes e.g. villages such as Sadberge, Middleton St George and Neasham are named in Hurworth School's Admissions policy to ensure those pupils will not be denied a place on the basis of distance.

**Impact Assessment** of future models of transport provision will undergo statutory Equality Impact Assessment as the proposals are developed which will again include schools, parents and carers, and the wider community.

### **Information for Decision-makers**

The following information should be considered by Decision-makers: -

- The proposal developed is based upon the pupil demographics in the current Year 7 in our secondary schools.
- The pupil population is subject to change and the current dip in secondary school numbers reaches its lowest levels for the year 2012-13 and will begin to rise from 2013-14.
- Over 1,500 forms of correspondence have been received from parents, school governors and schools regarding the proposal for secondary school transport. The views expressed related to the disproportionate discrimination against families on two grounds; faith and socio-economic. The letters raised concerns about the proposals in terms of: -
  - reducing choice,
  - preventing social cohesion,
  - increasing traffic congestion
  - pollution
  - safety of children walking to school
  - lack of public transport provision
  - expense for low income families
- Alternative options are currently being explored for school transport. The Council is working with schools to develop a transport model for the future.

Rachel Jones/Janet Walke  
February 14, 2012