



Cabinet report

Date	12 MAY 2022
Title	POST 16 TRANSPORT POLICY STATEMENT 2022
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this paper is to approve the Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2022 following public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. That Cabinet approves the proposed 2022 Post-16 Transport Policy Statement as set out in Appendix 1. |
|---|

BACKGROUND

3. Statutory guidance from the Department for Education on post-16 transport to education and training requires local authorities to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement each year, specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport for persons of sixth form age in education or training. The sixth form age duty applies to young people of sixth form age and young people with Education Health and Care (EHC) plans up to age 25 where they are continuing on a course started before their 19th birthday. The policy must be determined and published by 31 May each year.
4. The Isle of Wight Council and its post 16 providers are committed to ensuring transport is available to enable students to access education and training as set out in the policy statement. The support is provided either by the Council or by post 16 providers.
5. There is no automatic entitlement to local authority funded home to school or college transport once a student is over the age of 16. The Council has considered its resources and the travel to college opportunities for students. Students can attend a college or school of choice and, if needed, apply to their provider's student support for assistance.

6. The Council does offer, under discretionary power, a transport service to enable students aged 16+ with a Learning Difficulty or Disability (usually with an EHC Plan) to access a place that is the closest suitable provision for their needs subject to certain conditions.
7. Students from low-income families, in care or care leavers may be eligible for a yearly bursary through the 16-19 Bursary Fund from the Education Funding Agency. Students and families apply for the bursary directly through their chosen college or post 16 providers.
8. Statutory guidance clarifies the duty to consult with stakeholders in developing the statement before publication.
9. The Isle of Wight College, school sixth forms and post-16 training providers also provide travel information for learners. Southern Vectis bus company provide a variety of reduced fare options for young people and students.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

10. The recommendation in this report links to the Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority, which is to work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local school provision. It supports students with learning difficulty or disabilities to continue into post 16 training or education.

Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere

11. The home to school transport service primarily contracts with Isle of Wight Council approved transport operators to provide vehicles suitable for transporting students with special needs. These operators license through Isle of Wight Council meeting its requirements for vehicle emissions. Where the needs of the student allow, the service will provide transport through a pass on public bus services.

Economic Recovery and Reducing Poverty

12. As set out within the corporate plan, this report demonstrates the Council's commitment to work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local education provision and Post 16 transport supports this.

Impact on Young People and Future Generations

13. The decisions the Council makes now not only affect current residents, but may have long term impacts, both positive and negative, on young people and future generations. These impacts may not immediately be apparent or may not emerge for a number of years or decades. Impacts will be interrelated across the various domains of young people's lives from housing, employment or training, health and the environment.
14. The Council's provision of transport to certain Post 16 students with learning difficulties and disabilities facilitates those students' access to education which in turn may ultimately support their employability. The consultation process invites those young people and their families to contribute to the content of the policy.

Corporate Aims

15. The recommendation in this report directly links to the Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority which is to work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local school provision.

CONSULTATION

16. The Isle of Wight Council public consultation on the 2022 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement ran from 24 January 2022 to 7 March 2022. The Council proposed that the existing policy was rolled forward without change to apply for the coming academic year.
17. The Council wrote to all its secondary schools, the Isle of Wight College, SENDIASS and People Matter inviting them to share with parents and students. No responses were received.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

18. There is an existing cost to the Isle of Wight Council to provide a transport service for those students with a learning difficulty or disability. The number of Post 19 students requiring transport is under regular review to understand if that cohort is increasing in numbers and associated costs. The annual cost in 2021/22 was over £210,000 serving approximately 65 students of Post 16 age. Two thirds of students travelling attend schools with sixth form including St George's School. There is some use of annual bus passes costing approximately £15k. The remaining costs are incurred on contracted costs using a combination of taxis, minibuses and larger buses into 8 main destinations. No substantive changes have been proposed to the policy and so 2022/23 activity is expected to be broadly in line with current numbers accessing the service. Although student numbers may vary slightly, a similar number of vehicles is expected to be required to transport the students to and from home to their provider. The transport market has seen rising costs for some time with increasing fuel costs, and reduced availability for vehicle drivers. Therefore, costs for that service may increase further, in line with rising inflation and rising fuel prices. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) applied to contracts in September 2021 was 3.2%. The most recent published figure for March 2022 has increased to 6.2% and is still rising. The August 2022 figure will apply to contracts and will likely create an additional burden of at least £10,000 in this budget area. This specific item will be monitored against the current 2022/23 inflationary funding allocated for the wider home to school transport service to keep under review the net position.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

19. Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy. The policy must be published on the Council's website by 31 May each year.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

20. The Council as a public body is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

No issues arose last year during the application of the policy. Those with a disability are supported by the policy. No adverse impact regarding race, culture, gender, or disability arising from this report has been identified.

OPTIONS

21.
 1. To approve the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2022 as set out in Appendix 1.
 2. Not to approve the proposed Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2022 as set out in Appendix 1.

RISK MANAGEMENT

22. The action being taken is to approve an annual policy statement which will be published in line with the Isle of Wight Council's statutory duty. In approving the policy, there is no risk and it ensures the Council complies with its legal duty requirement to compile, approve and publish a statement. If the statement is not approved, the Isle of Wight Council would not be compliant with statutory requirements and officers would have no basis on which to consider any requests from families seeking transport for a post 16 student.

The proposed policy statement maintains the Council's current offer for post 16 students and ensures the Isle of Wight Council have met their statutory duty to consult on, compile, approve and publish the annual statement. The statement has undergone the required consultation process inviting comment from stakeholders on the following:

- Any comment on the 2022 Post 16 Transport Policy Statement
- Any Post 16 travel issues in the stakeholder's respective area.

EVALUATION

23. The recommendation is that the Council proceeds with implementing the Post 16 Policy Statement as proposed in Appendix 1.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1 - Post 16 Transport Statement

BACKGROUND PAPERS

24. [Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Contact Point: Martin Goff, Head of Transport and Admissions, ☎+44 370 779 8176 e-mail martin.goff@hants.gov.uk

STEVE CROCKER
Director of Children's Services

CLLR DEBBIE ANDRE
Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
Education and Lifelong Skills