

Medium Term Financial Plan Equality Impact Assessment of Budget Proposal in 2024/25

Where 'Yes/No' options please 'bold appropriate answer

Service area: Home to School Transport
Budget reference: PD19 / CHTR02
Budget proposal in 2024/25 (£): £650,000
Assistant Director/Director: Gemma Dando
EIA review due date: Spring 2024

Budget Ref.	Budget Proposal	Budget Reduction £			
		2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
PD20	Transformation activity to manage the increasing demand for home to schools transport services for children and young people within North Somerset	£650,000	£717,000	£1,400,000	£1,000,000

Equality Impacts

Please make High, Medium or Low 'bold' as appropriate

Service User Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	Low

1. The Proposal

1.1 Background to proposal

Transformation activity proposes to manage the increasing demand for home to school transport services for children and young people within North Somerset. This programme will review and update our policies and approach to service delivery to maintain the provision of statutory services, whilst reducing the cost of transport services. There is a requirement to review our suite of Home to School Transport Policies in line with changes to the Statutory Guidance (revision published August 2023)

A statutory service is provided where an application for Home to School Transport demonstrates that the following criteria have been met:

- Statutory school age
Children must be between the age of 5 and 16
- Statutory walking distances
Children under the age of 8 who attend their nearest suitable school where it is more than 2 miles from their home;
Children aged 8 and over who attend their nearest suitable school where it is more than 3 miles from their home.
- Nearest suitable school
The nearest suitable school for the purposes of home to school travel assistance is the nearest suitable school to their home address that is (or would have been) able to offer them a place. This is determined at the point of application by the Authority during the school admission process.
- Safe walking routes
Walking routes are calculated between the child's home address and nearest school entrance where a safe walking route exists.
- Special educational needs, disabilities (SEND) and mobility problems
Home to school travel assistance will be provided where the young person is attending the nearest suitable school but because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems could not reasonably be expected to walk there, irrespective of the distance or whether there is a safe walking route.
- Extended Rights
Applicants will qualify for free home to school assistance if they are entitled to free school meals, or if financial means testing criteria are met

Non statutory services reflect the discretion the council considers in circumstances where eligibility criteria (see above has not been met). Examples of that are:

- Children under 5 years of age who are accessing a nursery provision within an all age setting and are on the School roll
- Parental disability or where multiple siblings attend different schools
- Post 16 travel
- Discretionary applications on a case by case basis.

The transformation seeks to cost mitigate £650,000 during 2024/24. This is a saving against what represents a significant area of spend for the Council and where ongoing cost pressures due to both rising demand and cost increases, are no longer sustainable.

A piece of work is underway with consultants to determine how we make this saving, and we think there is potential for savings related to the range of transport offers available and how we can deliver those differently. This work will also review non statutory (discretionary) services such as post-16 travel we plan to engage with relevant stakeholders and complete the work to identify the best options to reduce costs in the most equitable way.

When that work is completed by consultants, an option paper will be presented to Corporate Leadership Team that will detail the opportunities to reduce costs of these services, this report will include an updated EIA. Any changes should be part of a suite of measures that continue to offer a means of support to those continuing their home to school transport experience as well as into further education. There will be a focus on obtaining life skills that enables pupil's independence and supports transition to adulthood that equally works alongside reducing the budget.

This EIA will be updated in spring 2024 with the outcomes from that work and engagement with stakeholders to enable reassessment and for it to be re-presented as part of the decision-making process.

1.2 Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers

Not known at this time but the ongoing engagement with stakeholders will provide clarity on impacts.

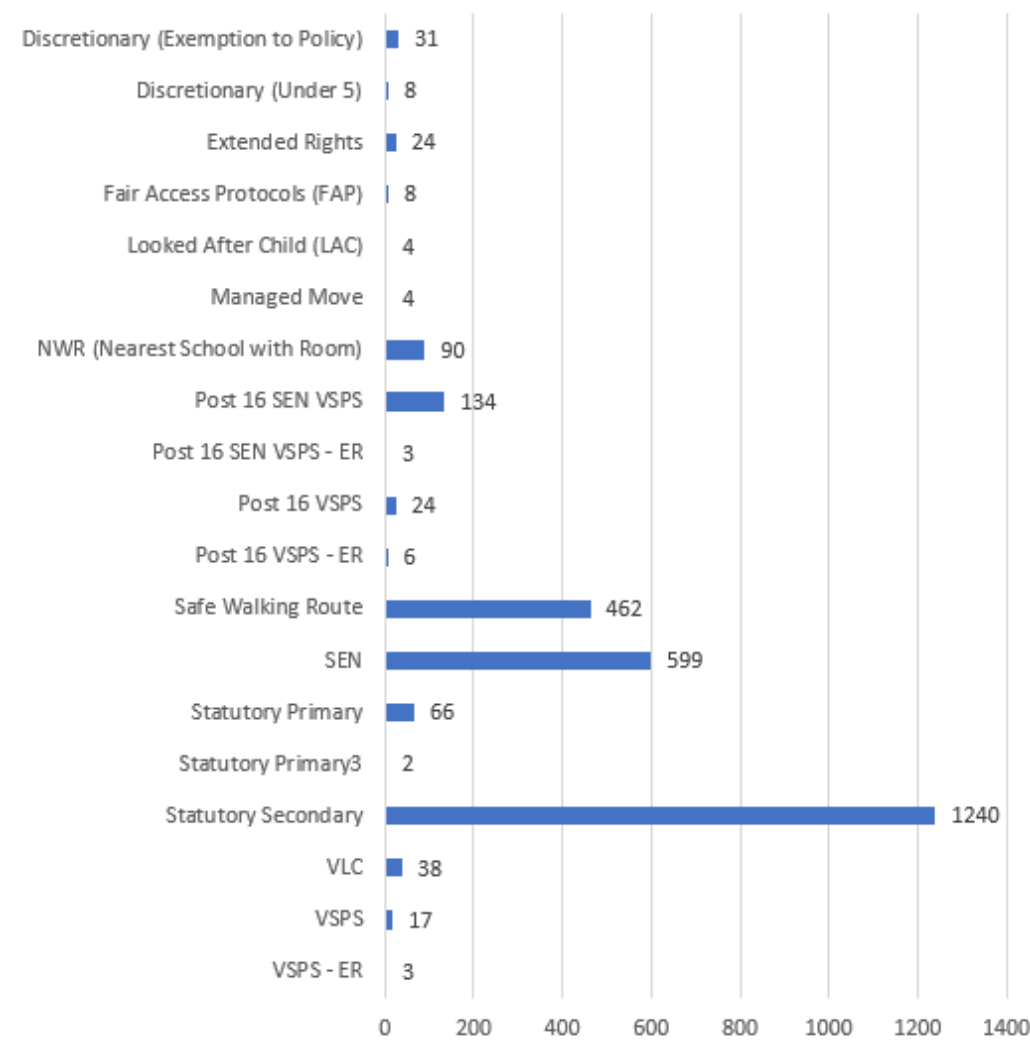
Section 2 – What Do We Know?

2.1 Customer/staff profile details – what data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be, affected?

Until the consultant work has completed and an options paper has been prepared, the full details of who may be affected are not finalised. However non-statutory transport provision will include students aged 4 to 19 years of age.

Within the academic year 2024 to date, there are 2,763 passengers in receipt of a travel offer/award. Of those, 227 young people are non-statutory and in receipt of a discretionary award. Award types are offered as follows:

Count of PAX by Award Type



Key:

Vacant Seat Payment Scheme (VSPS)

Voyage Learning Campus, Pupil Referral Unit (VLC)

Extended Rights (ER)

2.2 What does the data or evidence tell us about the potential impact on diverse groups, and how is this supported by historic experience/data?

Whilst groups such as those on low incomes may be affected by any changes, low-income households are exempt from fees in accordance with current policy and means testing criteria.

Of the 227 young people that are in receipt of a discretionary award, there are 12 passengers who qualify for an exemption and would not likely be affected by proposals.

We don't yet know which of the young people using the service will be subject to any change in how we deliver services. This is the work that the consultants are doing to help inform the decisions.

2.3 Are there any gaps in the data, for example across protected characteristics where information is limited or not available?

We do not hold information on religion, sexual orientation or gender reassignment within the service, but this is not deemed to be relevant to the proposed service changes.

2.4 How have we involved or considered the views of the people that could be affected?

A draft of this Equality Impact Assessment was shared with Equality Stakeholders on 12 January 2024. They made the following helpful comments and observations:

Comment	Response
Please make it clear what elements of Home to School Transport are statutory and non-statutory	Amended the EIA
Please explain in more detail what is meant by promoting life skills and encouraging independence and why this is important/relevant	Amended the EIA
Concerns re difference in outcomes between rural and urban communities, for example those who	The revisions to policy will offer a greater range of transport awards which are both flexible and diverse.

<p>live in urban areas will be well served by public transport, better road links, footways, street lighting etc. With this being a more significant challenge for those accessing schools in rural areas.</p>	<p>This will include Parental Travel Budgets where appropriate, but we are equally keen to link our offers with the Active Travel Strategy where safe walking routes and public/demand responsive transport offer wider benefits within the community.</p>
<p>What opportunities are there for linking with commercial services to help support this proposal?</p>	<p>The Home to School service operates within an Integrated Transport model that considers the wider opportunities that may benefit our communities. We take those opportunities to the commercial market to capture interest and availability.</p>
<p>Concern that responsibility re transport and cost will switch to families who may rely on the Home to School Transport Service</p>	<p>Parental Travel Budgets options are by mutual agreement. In many cases they are suited to meeting specialist medical needs, but budgets can also be used within communities collaboratively to procure local solutions. The budget requires pupils access their placement rather than how they do so.</p>
<p>Does the council have the capacity for individual support and assessment?</p>	<p>Independent Travel Training (ITT) is a means of providing individual assessment and support towards achieving independence and obtaining key life skills. We do not have dedicated ITT resources at present and so we await the recommendation(s) from the transformation process to take that forward.</p>
<p>Are there opportunities to link with the voluntary sector to support the delivery of the Home to School Transport service?</p>	<p>Yes. We actively work with Community Transport Associations who supply us with community transport solutions such as ring a ride, Home to School and Community Meals solutions. We welcome the opportunity to expand on that where we can support with training and development needs.</p>
<p>Concerns re pupil safety on public transport particularly for young people with a disability.</p>	<p>Safety is paramount and officers will assess that needs can be met within any transport offer made. We work</p>

	closely with our schools, parent/carers and supporting agencies to consider that. Our current policy offers information on the role of parent/carer accompaniment as part of the journey experience. Independent Travel Training (ITT) will seek to enable and support young people to safely access appropriate modes of transport.
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We will consult on any changes to existing provision including stakeholder groups such as the parent carer forum and post-16 education providers. We will communicate with parents/carers any changes to a current transport offer.

2.5 What has this told us?

Please see table above.

2.6 Are there any gaps in our consultation, what are our plans for the future?

Further consultation with stakeholder groups will be undertaken as the transformation work is being conducted and the proposed way forward is more clearly understood. This is expected in February 2024 to enable consultation to inform decision-making in time for any changes to policy to be published by 31st May 2024.

Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

Will the proposal have a disproportionate impact on any of these groups? Please describe the nature of the impact in 'Summary of Impact' column. You should describe both negative and positive impacts.

Assessment of impact should include the consideration of Public Sector Equality Duties as listed in [section 149 of The Equality Act 2010](#), specifically:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Please indicate the impact level and impact type with an 'X' for each of the groups listed below.

Impact Level

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

Impact Type

+ = Positive, = = Neutral, - = Negative

Impact Level	Impact Level				Impact Type			Summary of Impact
	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		x					x	Changes to discretionary/non-statutory provision may impact on those young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) that are not of statutory school age and those who are not entitled to free or subsidised transport.
People from different ethnic groups				x				We do not collect this data.
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)			x					Out of the 2,773 young people who are accessing the service we know that 56.8% are male. Therefore, any changes to the service is likely to have a disproportionate impact on males.
People who are LGBTQ+				x				We do not collect this data.
People on a low income			x				x	Parents on low incomes may be affected by any changes that involve costs or contributions, but mitigations already exist such as 16-19 bursary and means testing.

Impact Level					Impact Type			Summary of Impact
	H	M	L	N	+	=	-	
People in particular age groups		x					x	Any change to the delivery of the service will have an impact on school age children. The changes proposed are likely to include alternative modes of transport and impacts could include additional travelling time or sharing travel provision where appropriate. However, enabling independent travel can also offer positive impacts and outcomes. E.g. develop key life skills and health benefits where walking/cycling involved.
People in particular faith groups				x				We do not collect this data.
People who are married or in a civil partnership				x				We do not collect this data.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				x				We do not collect this data.
Other specific impacts, for example: carers, parents, Armed Forces Community, impact on health and wellbeing. Please specify: Parents			x				x	Parents on low incomes may be affected by any changes that involve costs or contributions, but mitigations already exist such as 16-19 bursary and means testing.

Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other service areas?

This is an impact that occurs when you consider services or activities together; a change or activity in one area may create an additional impact somewhere else, this maybe within or outside of your directorate or service area. For example changing the venue for delivery of a service and there being a change to public transport in the same area

Yes

No

Although it should be noted that there is potential for partnership and collaborative working with Community Transport providers. A budget saving is currently proposed for Community Transport (SPTC01).

If 'yes', please describe?

Section 4 – Staff Impact

Is there an anticipated impact on North Somerset Council staff as a result of this proposal?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe the nature of the impact, including how many posts could be affected, please state whether they are vacant, or filled permanently or temporarily.

If there is going to be a reduction in the number of posts please indicate the number of FTE

Not applicable

Section 5 - Action Plan

Where you have listed that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	How will it be monitored?
Consultant workstream to identify options	Formal decision-making process
Consultation with key stakeholder groups	Review and response to feedback published
Early communication of any changes to policy	Publish any changes by 31 st May ahead of new academic year

If negative impacts remain after the above actions have been taken, please provide an explanation below.

Impact on parents with low incomes will be mitigated through the 16–19 year-old bursary and means testing (currently applied)

Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with your service users.

Engagement with stakeholders will be undertaken to help identify and refine the options to achieve cost savings in the most equitable way.

Where any changes to policy necessitate the need to consult, we will do so in line with council process. In doing so, we will seek the support of our stakeholders to ensure we capture the views of those cohorts concerned.

If any changes to policy and procedures are made these will be published on NSC website and parents informed in writing well in advance if changes were to affect existing provision.

There is an annual requirement for the council to publish any changes to discretionary policy by 31st May.