



**West  
Northamptonshire  
Council**

# Post-16 Transport Policy Statement Consultation 2024

# Contents

1. Executive Summary .....	2
2. Introduction .....	3
2.1 Overview .....	3
2.2 Related documents .....	4
2.3 How to have a say .....	4
2.4 Method .....	4
2.5 Publicity .....	4
3. Response to the online consultation .....	5
3.1 Response profile .....	5
3.2 Parent/Carer Contribution for Post 16 Transport proposal .....	8
3.3 Increase the use of Personal Travel Budgets .....	12
3.4 Support for young adults undertaking an apprenticeship .....	14
3.5 Transport only for normal start and finish times .....	15
3.6 Further comments .....	16
4. Written responses .....	16
5. Feedback from consultation events .....	17

## 1. Executive Summary

- The Post-16 Transport Policy Consultation 2024 received a total of 785 responses. 779 were received via West Northamptonshire Council's online consultation platform, 6 were received by email.
- The consultation period for submitting responses was between 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 and 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024
- Most of the responses received through the online consultation platform were from parents of students or apprentices (476).
- The consultation detail has been widely promoted using several means including local press, social media, newsletters, email notifications and public consultation drop-in events at the request of schools/colleges.
- Proposal to revise the contribution required by parents/carers and increase this from £600 to £1,000 per academic year with discounts being applied under specific circumstances:
  - For the revised contribution: 7 per cent agree, 91 per cent disagree, 1 per cent neither agree nor disagree. 609 comments were received on the proposal.
  - For the discount for low-income families: 81 per cent agree, 11 per cent disagree, 7 per cent neither agree nor disagree, 1 had no opinion. 292 comments received on proposal.
- Proposal to increase the use of Personal Travel Budgets instead of the Council providing transport where it is better value for money for the Council: 30 per cent agree, 34 per cent disagree, 35 per cent had no opinion. 186 comments received on proposal.

- Proposal to provide a Personal Travel Budget only for sole transport except in exceptional circumstances where transport may be provided by the Council: 33 per cent agree, 26 per cent disagree, 42 per cent had no opinion. 66 comments received on proposal.
- Proposal to provide a Personal Travel Budget to young adults undertaking an apprenticeship to the education setting only except in exceptional circumstances where transport may be provided by the Council: 72 per cent agree, 10 per cent disagree, 13 per cent neither agree nor disagree, 7 per cent had no opinion, 184 comments received on proposal.
- Proposal to continue to provide transport only at the normal start and finish times of the education or training setting: 79 per cent agree, 13 per cent disagree, 6 per cent neither agree nor disagree, 2 had no opinion, 136 comments received on proposal.

There were 164 general comments received on the proposals.

## **2. Introduction**

### **2.1 Overview**

We asked for views on changes being proposed to our Home to School Post 16 Transport service. These changes are required to meet increased demand and operating costs, whilst also exploring opportunities to give greater flexibility for parents, support our young people's independence and help to promote sustainable travel.

We recognise circumstances for each child, young person and family are often different, therefore we needed to know how each of our proposals may affect children, parents, and carers. We also sought views from schools and colleges who may also be affected.

This is part of a larger review of transport policies.

The changes we are proposing will not come into effect until September 2024.

As well as inviting general comments on the draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement, the consultation focused on the following key areas of Home to School Transport, respondents could choose to comment on some or all. The key areas of this consultation:

- Increase in the parent/carer contribution towards the cost of Post 16 Transport
- Support for young adults undertaking apprenticeships
- Increased use of Personal Transport Budgets (PTB)
- PTB where sole transport would be the only suitable option, unless in exceptional circumstances
- Transport provision only at standard school/college start and finish times.

This document sets out the summarised results to the consultation which took place from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024 to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

### **2.2 Related documents**

- Supporting information

- Draft West Northamptonshire Council Post 16 Education Transport Policy (September 2024 – July 2025)

### **2.3 How to have a say**

People were invited to have their say by either:

- Completing an online survey
- Emailing or writing in.

### **2.4 Method**

The consultation consisted of an online questionnaire which was made available through the council's consultation hub, Citizen Space, at:

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news/reminder-have-your-say-post-16-school-travel-west-northants>

The questionnaire was offered in an alternative format including large font or easy read. Paper copies were made available where required. Alternatively, people could also respond via email at [schooltransportpolicy@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:schooltransportpolicy@westnorthants.gov.uk), or post using The Guildhall address.

Respondents were provided with related documentation and material that related to the proposals within the consultation. Respondents were also provided with further information and explanations around the reasoning for the proposals which were positioned throughout the parts of the online questionnaire for ease of accessing this information.

### **2.5 Publicity**

The consultation was publicised widely throughout the duration of the activity using different means including:

- Local press: A series of media releases that went to circa 116 newsrooms and individuals (including hyperlocal, local, regional, and national, print, digital and broadcast including the Chronicle and Echo and BBC Radio Northampton) from the council's Communications Team.
- Social media:
  - 4 promotions using Twitter, reaching a cumulative total of 5,536 accounts
  - Additionally, the consultation was promoted through Facebook posts 4 times, reaching a cumulative total of 16,000 accounts
- E-newsletters were sent on 4 different dates during the consultation. Articles were also included in news bulletins to town and parish councils.
- Online council news pages: Internal communications and external public pages.
- Notifications were sent to schools, colleges and other education and training establishments. In addition, a transport partnership working group was formed to help inform the consultation of the potential impacts of the proposals both on the settings themselves and their students and families.

Detail about the consultation was also circulated via email to those registered on the council's Consultation Register and Residents Panel (over 700 contacts), as well as being sent to council members and parish councils. Wider promotion of the consultation was encouraged through these means.

### 3. Response to the online consultation

There were 779 online responses to the questionnaire through the council's consultation platform.

The online consultation questionnaire was structured in a way that respondents were able to comment on individual proposals. There was no requirement for respondents to answer every question, therefore the total of responses for each question may differ.

#### 3.1 Response profile

Respondents were asked to choose one option to state what capacity they were responding to the consultation. This was a required question, there were 598 responses.

**Table 1, In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?**

<b>Respondent type</b>	<b>Count</b>
A parent or carer of a young person that attends school, college or other further education or training	476
A student aged 14 to 16 and considering further education or training	87
A student aged 16 to 19 and completing further education	64
A young adult aged 16 to 19 that is doing an apprenticeship or thinking of doing an apprenticeship	4
A student aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care plan	0
A transport professional (taxi, minibus, bus operator)	0
An educational professional (head, or another representative)	35
Another organisation, business or group	0
A resident of West Northamptonshire	0
A West Northamptonshire Council Councillor	9
A West Northamptonshire Council employee	2
A representative of a town or parish council	11
Other	
- Grandparent	2
- Family friend	1
- Relative	1
- Parent	3
- School Administrator	1
- Voluntary community group	1

#### **Parents and carers**

Those who responded as a parent or carer of a child or young person were asked a series of questions to assist us to build an accurate understanding of the characteristics and communities responding. 66 per cent of those who stated they were parents or carers, completed all or some of this part.

Parent and carer respondents were asked which age group applies to their children or young people; this question allowed for more than one answer as applied to any child within their care. There were 0 responses to this question.

**Table 2, Which age group applies to your children or young people?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Age 0 to 4 (Early years)	0
Age 4 to 5 (Reception)	0
Age 5 to 11 (school years 1 to 6)	0
Age 11 to 16 (school years 7 to 11)	0
Age 16 to 18, post 16 (school years 12 to 13)	0
Age 19-25 with an Education, Care and Health Plan	0

Parents and carers were asked where their children or young people attended school. 0 said they go to school in West Northamptonshire, and 0 said they go to school outside the area. They were also asked about the type of school, if their children or young people currently receive home to school transport, the following questions allowed for more than one answer:

**Table 3, Which of the following describes your children or young people's current school or further educational establishment or training?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Mainstream school	0
Grammar school	0
College	0
Special educational needs (SEND) setting	0
Apprenticeship	0
Other (please state below)	0

**Table 4, If applicable, which of the following currently apply to you, your children or young people?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Eligible for free Post-16 Transport	0
Contributing £600 towards Post 16 Transport	0
Receiving a Personal Travel Budget for Post 16 Transport	0
None of the above	0

### **About you**

Those who responded as a student were asked questions to assist us to build an accurate understanding of the characteristics and communities responding. 17 per cent of those who stated they were students, completed all or some of this part.

**Table 5, If you attend school, college or are in other further education, please select the option that applies:**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Mainstream school	103
Grammar school	1
College	9
Special educational needs (SEND) setting	8
Apprenticeship	1
Other	
- 6 <sup>th</sup> Form	4
- Foundation school	1
- Online	1

Students were asked where they attended school, college or further education. 118 said they go to school in West Northamptonshire, and 14 said they go to school outside the area.

**Table 6, Which of the following apply to you?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
I'm eligible for free Post-16 Transport	4
My parents/carers are contributing £600 towards Post-16 Transport	39
I receive a Personal Travel Budget for Post-16 Transport	1
None of the above	85

**Table 7, Do you have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	26
No	97
Unsure	6

### **Table 8, Do you have a Education, Health and Care plan?**

There were 128 responses to this question.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
Yes	12
No	101
Unsure	15

#### **Organisation**

Those who identified that they were responding on behalf of an organisation were asked to provide detail namely their organisation name and job role. Of the 23 that responded, they all identified as education providers or support services. Job roles and names of respondents are omitted from this report to protect anonymity. All of those who stated they were responding on behalf of one of these groups, completed all or some of this part.

Respondents to this part were asked if they could tell us if they provided certain services relevant to this consultation.

### **Table 8, Does your organisation or group provide any of the following?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>
School transport services	11
Other services for children with SEND	14
None of the above	2

## **3.2 Parent/Carer Contribution for Post 16 Transport proposal**

Local authorities can charge a contribution towards the cost of providing transport to Post 16 Students. The draft proposals are to charge £1000 in order to reflect the costs that West Northamptonshire Council pays in providing transport for Post 16 Students.

The current policy requires a parent/carers contribution of £600 per academic year.

One of the proposed changes is to revise the contribution required by parents/carers and increase this from £600 to £1,000 per academic year. This better reflects the actual cost to the Council for providing a seat to a mainstream learner and will therefore help meet the costs of providing the service. The original cost was introduced over 10 years ago and hasn't been reviewed until now.

The following discounts will apply:

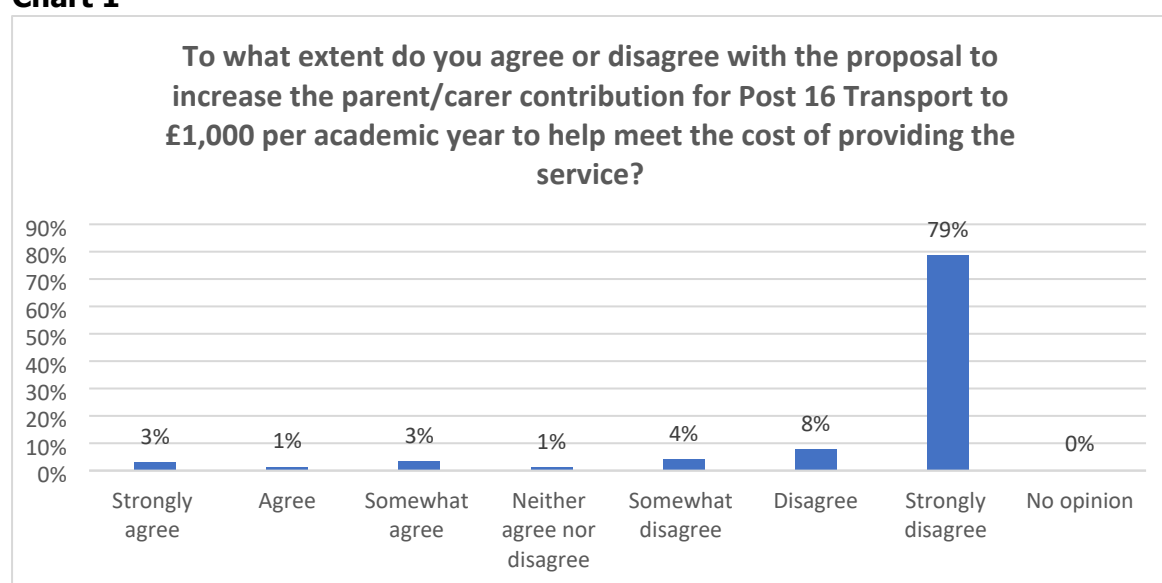
- For students that attend mainstream schools, where the family qualify on grounds of low income, the contribution will be reduced by 50% (£500).
- For SEND students whose parents/carers are on a low income, and where the student is aged 16 to 25 and has an Education, Health and Care Plan, transport will be provided free of charge.



**Table 9, To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to increase the parent/carer contribution for Post 16 Transport to £1,000 per academic year to help meet the cost of providing the service?**

Response	Count	Per cent (%)
Strongly agree	21	3
Agree	9	1
Somewhat agree	23	3
Neither agree nor disagree	8	1
Somewhat disagree	28	4
Disagree	52	8
Strongly disagree	527	79
No opinion	2	0

**Chart 1**



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal to increase the parent/carer contribution for Post 16 Transport to £1,000 per academic year to help meet the cost of providing the service. 608 chose to provide comment. 31 comments were received from those respondents who said they agreed strongly, agreed, or somewhat agreed. The following provides a summary of these comments:

- Concerns about Affordability:** Many express concerns about the affordability of the increased costs, especially for families with multiple children in further education or those in low-income brackets. Some suggest that the increase is too steep and should have been implemented incrementally.
- Equality in Education:** There's a sentiment that post-16 education should be treated like pre-16 education, given its compulsory nature. Some argue for extending discounts to older students and ensuring that SEND pupils and those from deprived families are not adversely affected.
- Rural Areas and Distance:** The impact on rural areas, where public transport options are limited, is highlighted. Some question the fairness of charging the same cost for different travel distances.

4. **Service Quality and Timing:** Concerns are raised about the quality of service, including the early departure times for buses and the reliability of the service in winter.
5. **Alternatives and Suggestions:** Some suggest exploring partnerships or sponsorships to offset costs, adjusting charges based on actual costs, or ensuring that charges are in line with those in other regions. Others propose that parents should take more responsibility for their children's transportation.
6. **Support for the Increase:** A few respondents understand the need for the increase due to rising costs and express support, provided it doesn't impact disadvantaged students. Some believe the increase is reasonable and necessary to continue providing the service.

One respondent who said that they neither agree nor disagree but provided comment:

1. **Understanding:** Understand the reason, but the increase is too high.

The majority of the 670 comments received for respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree were about...

1. **Legal Requirement:** Since education until 18 is mandatory, it's argued that transport should be provided to facilitate this.
2. **Financial Strain:** The increase is seen as a significant burden on families, especially those in rural areas with limited public transport options and should to be more in line with inflation or implemented in increments.
3. **Equality:** The increase is viewed as disproportionately affecting rural parts of West Northants.
4. **Impact on Education:** Concerns are raised that the cost could deter students from continuing education after 16.
5. **Alternatives:** Some suggest that the cost should be reviewed annually or that transport should be free until the end of the school year in which students turn 18.
6. **Special Needs:** The increase could particularly affect students with special needs who rely on school transport.
7. **Environmental Impact:** The cost could lead to more parents driving their children to school, increasing traffic and pollution.
8. **Rural Disadvantage:** The policy is seen as penalizing students in rural locations, who have no other transport options.
9. **Administration:** Criticism is made of the current payment system, suggesting a direct debit option would be more efficient.
10. **Support for Parents:** There are calls for greater support for parents, particularly in rural areas.

No comments were provided by respondents who selected 'no opinion' or chose not to select an answer.

One respondent did not answer but chose to provide comment that fares should reflect the distance travelled and remain within inflation limits. They highlight that public transport to state schools should be promoted and funded. They warn that many families won't be able to afford the fare increase, leading to increased traffic and pollution, negatively impacting local residents,

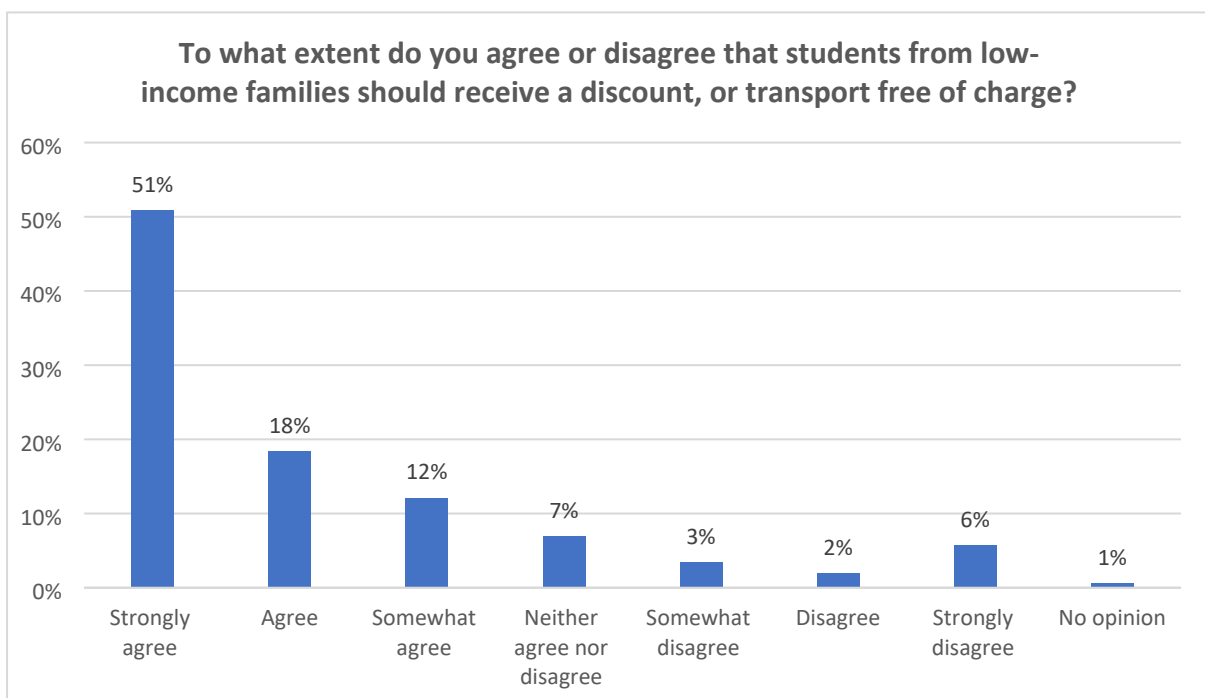
businesses, and pedestrian safety around the school. They highlight that one bus carrying 60 students could potentially remove 60 cars from the road, reducing traffic and pollution.

**Table 10, To what extent do you agree or disagree that students from low-income families should receive a discount, or transport free of charge?**

There were 665 responses to this question. This was not a required field.

Response	Count	Per cent (%)
Strongly agree	340	51
Agree	123	18
Somewhat agree	81	12
Neither agree nor disagree	46	7
Somewhat disagree	23	3
Disagree	13	2
Strongly disagree	38	6
No opinion	4	1

**Chart 2**



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal that students from low-income families should receive a discount, or transport free of charge. 396 chose to provide comment. The majority of comments (150) were received from those respondents who said they agreed strongly, agreed, or somewhat agreed. The following provides a summary of these comments:

1. **Equal Opportunities and Social Mobility:**
  - Financial penalties for attending school or college further reduce equality of opportunity.

- Support for low-income families should be gradual rather than abruptly dropped when a child is no longer officially in poverty but still faces financial challenges.
2. **Universal Access to Education:**
    - Ensuring equal opportunities for children from financially secure families and those from low-income backgrounds is essential.
    - Striking a balance is crucial to ensure that no group is unfairly burdened.
    - Low-income individuals deserve help, but we must also consider those who are just outside the benefits threshold.
  3. **Balancing Costs and Impact:**
    - While free transport is ideal, the reality is complex.
    - Families on the borderline of financial struggle may find it challenging to pay for transport.
    - A sliding scale approach, where support gradually decreases, could be more equitable.
  4. **Equal Access to Education:**
    - Disabled children benefit significantly from regular school attendance, and their abilities and needs should not hinder their access to education.
    - Families of young people with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) should also be considered.
    - Ensuring that students can get to school is crucial. Without proper transportation, many kids won't be able to attend.
  5. **Personal Struggles:**
    - Balancing work and caregiving can be difficult, especially when transportation options are limited.
    - Some parents may be able to transport their children even with low income if they don't work.
    - Assistance should be tailored to individual circumstances.
  6. **Compulsory Education:**
    - Given that education is compulsory until age 18, free transport for all students until they complete sixth form seems reasonable.
  7. **Fairness and Practicality:**
    - Providing discounted or free transportation to these students is not only a matter of fairness but also practicality.
    - It helps alleviate the financial burden on families and ensures that students can focus on their education.
    - Funding from council tax, especially progressively based on property value, could be a more efficient approach.
  8. **Levelling the Playing Field:**
    - Education is considered the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.
    - If students from low-income families cannot attend school regularly due to financial constraints, they may fall behind their peers.
  9. **Professional Council-Run Transport:**
    - To create an equitable world, we should consider state-run school transport.
  10. **Means Testing:**
    - Means testing can help tailor assistance to those who genuinely need it.
    - A one-size-fits-all approach may not address individual circumstances.
  11. **Rural Areas and Active Travel Routes:**
    - Students in rural areas face additional challenges in accessing towns and villages.
    - Implementing Active Travel Routes in rural regions could make access to education cost-free.

- Many may choose alternative routes or even withdraw from education due to financial strain.
12. **Affordability for All:**
    - While £1000 per annum may not seem high-income, it can be a burden for families with multiple children.
  13. **Struggles and Mental Wellbeing:**
    - Families often face difficult choices between bills and essentials like food.
    - The rise in poverty affects mental wellbeing and overall quality of life.
  14. **Balancing Costs:**
    - While it doesn't have to be entirely free, a reasonable minimum charge could be considered.
    - A 50% reduction after reaching a threshold is a more nuanced approach.
  15. **SEND Children and Special Schools:**
    - SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) children should be included in this category.
    - Access to transport is crucial for them to reach their nearest special school. SEN (Special Educational Needs) children often attend schools miles away from home.
  16. **Defining Low Income:**
    - £1000 or £600 is indeed a significant amount for most families, regardless of how low income is defined.
    - Low income doesn't cover everyone's financial realities.
  17. **Affordability and Rural Locations:**
    - No child should be priced out of education.
    - Rural locations should be viable homes for families of all income levels.
    - In rural areas where walking or cycling isn't safe, students must have the ability to travel to school.

Fourteen respondents who said that they neither agree nor disagree provided comment:

1. **Affordability and Equality:**
  - **Agree:** Many believe that affordable or free transportation for low-income families is essential. Education is a right, and ensuring access to school without financial burden promotes equality.
  - **Disagree:** Some argue that affordability should not be limited to low-income families. Many families, regardless of income, find transportation costs challenging. It's not just about low-income households; it's about making education accessible for all.
2. **Threshold for Low Income:**
  - **Agree:** The threshold for low income is often set so low that even families slightly above it struggle financially. Adjusting this threshold could help more families qualify for assistance.
  - **Disagree:** Critics argue that expanding the threshold might strain resources and dilute the intended impact on the neediest families.
3. **Education as a Public Good:**
  - **Agree:** Education benefits society as a whole. Providing free or heavily subsidized transportation ensures that all students can attend school, fostering an educated and skilled workforce.
  - **Disagree:** Some contend that education is a personal responsibility, and families should bear the costs. They argue that other public services (like healthcare) are also essential but not universally free.
4. **Means Testing vs. Universal Approach:**

- **Agree:** Means testing ensures targeted assistance. However, applying the same criteria to sixth formers as younger students could simplify the system.
  - **Disagree:** Treating everyone equally, regardless of income, avoids stigmatization. If education is compulsory, it should be covered universally.
5. **Impact on Student Choices:**
- **Agree:** High transportation fees can deter students from continuing their education. Increasing costs disproportionately affects low-income families, limiting options.
  - **Disagree:** Some argue that students should consider proximity when choosing schools. If a local school is accessible, transportation costs may not be an issue.
6. **Middle-Income Families:**
- **Agree:** Middle-income families often fall through the cracks. They work hard but don't qualify for assistance. Equal treatment for all ensures fairness.
  - **Disagree:** Critics say that resources are finite, and focusing on the neediest is more effective. Middle-income families can explore other options.
7. **Exceptional Circumstances:**
- **Agree:** Families facing exceptional circumstances (e.g., remote areas, disabilities) should receive discounts. Flexibility is crucial.
  - **Disagree:** Some argue that exceptions create complexity and administrative challenges.

Fifty-two comments were received from respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree were about...

1. **Support for Free Transport:**
- **Low-income families:** Advocates argue that low-income families should receive free transport due to the reduction in welfare benefits over the past decade.
  - **Universal policy:** Some believe that transport to education facilities for 11-18 year-olds should be universally free, regardless of income.
  - **Equity:** Supporters emphasize that all children should receive the same discount or free transport, regardless of their family's financial situation.
  - **Parent's income:** A viewpoint suggests that parent's income should be irrelevant when providing this service.
2. **Opposition to Free Transport:**
- **Limited discount:** Some propose a limited discount rather than completely free transport.
  - **Tax contribution:** Critics argue that people in higher tax brackets contribute more to the tax take, making free transport for all less equitable.
  - **Cost implications:** Concerns are raised about the significant cost for families of all incomes, especially with a £400 increase.
3. **Personal Experiences:**
- **Working families:** Individuals who work but don't receive benefits express frustration at the lack of help despite financial struggles.
  - **Chronic illness:** A working parent with a chronic mental illness highlights their financial challenges after essential expenses.

- **Perceived inequality:** Some feel that non-working families benefit unfairly while working families bear the burden.
4. **Support for Equal Support:**
    - **Fairness for All:** Some argue that support should be available to all students, irrespective of their background or their parents' financial circumstances. They emphasize that everyone should have equal access to education-related services.
    - **Minimal Cost:** Advocates propose that transport should either be free or have a minimal cost for all students attending further education within their catchment area. They highlight that education is compulsory until age 18 and should be facilitated by accessible transport services.
  5. **Challenges for All Families:**
    - **Equal Bus Costs:** It's pointed out that the cost of using public transportation is the same for everyone, regardless of income. Thus, it doesn't automatically cost less just because someone is on a low income.
    - **Financial Struggles:** Families across different income levels are facing increasing financial difficulties. Some argue that those not classified as low income also need support.
  6. **Incentives and Means Testing:**
    - **Existing Incentives:** There are already incentives for low-income families to participate in education, such as free school meals. However, some question why families not classified as low income should fund those who are.
    - **Means Testing:** The current system is based purely on work income and does not consider other financial responsibilities. For instance, some working parents support multiple children, including those in university.
  7. **Proposed Rises and Affordability:**
    - **Proposed Rise:** The proposed increase in costs for non-low-income families might be an attempt to cover the lack of contribution from low-income families. However, this can be challenging for families who are not classified as low income but still face financial constraints.
  8. **Equity and Responsibility:**
    - Some argue that providing free or discounted transport to low-income families is essential for equity. They emphasize that just because a family isn't classified as low income doesn't mean they can necessarily afford the proposed £1000 yearly cost.
    - There's a viewpoint that having children is a lifestyle choice, and parents should take more responsibility. Additionally, children over 16 should become more independent.
  9. **Universal Free Transport:**
    - Advocates for universal free transport believe that all children, regardless of income, should receive this service. Education is valued by society, and there shouldn't be a need to claim discounts.
  10. **Struggles Beyond Low Income:**
    - Families earning around £35,000 express that they still struggle financially despite not being classified as low income. They argue that free transport should be available to everyone.
  11. **Fairness and Circumstances:**
    - While some insist on parents paying, there should still be exceptions based on individual circumstances.
    - The proposed price increase is seen as demanding for families across all income levels. A consistent discount policy is essential.
    -

One comment was provided by respondents who selected 'no opinion' or chose not to select an answer. They commented that "2 parent family working and receive no benefits can mean worse off financially as the cost of outgoings is full whack with no exemption"

Three respondents did not answer but chose to provide comment that are summarised as -

1. **Equitable Access for All Students:**
  - It's unfair when some students pay while others don't due to their parents' jobs.
  - Equal access ensures that everyone has the same opportunities.
2. **Post-16 Education and Transport Costs:**
  - If education is compulsory until 18, transport costs should be provided.
  - This consistency ensures that all students can continue their education.
3. **Removing Barriers and Supporting Aspirations:**
  - No one should face financial barriers to education.
  - Education is a pathway to future opportunities.

### 3.3 Increase the use of Personal Travel Budgets

A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) applies to those eligible for travel assistance and is paid either termly or monthly for parents/carers to use to ensure their child/young adult gets to and from their school or other further education in a way that meets the family's needs.

The Council currently provides a PTB when requested by the parent or carer as long as it is a better use of Council resources. The PTB is worked out based on:

- The special educational needs and disabilities of the student
- The distance and time of the journey to school or other further education
- If they can travel alone
- If any specialist equipment is needed

The standard amount that can be paid under a PTB is £0.45 per mile for the cost of two return journeys for each day of attendance, however this can be increased where the actual cost incurred by the parent or carer is more than this, and where it represents value for money for the Council. Each case will be considered on its own merits and the value of the PTB will be agreed with the parent or carer.

**The proposal is to make a PTB the first offer instead of the Council providing transport, where it is better value for money for the Council.**

Respondents were asked what extent they agreed or disagreed that a PTB is a suitable alternative to the Council providing transport.

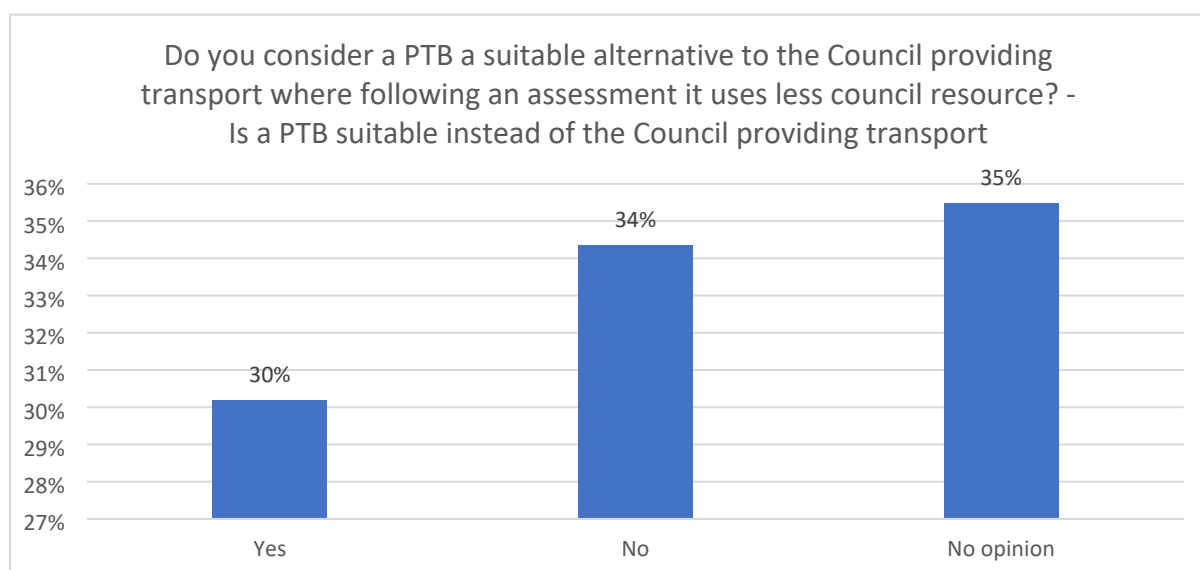
#### **Table 11, Do you consider a PTB a suitable alternative to the Council providing transport ?**

626 chose to answer this question.

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
Yes	189	30
No	215	34
No opinion	222	35



**Chart 3**



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal that a PTB would be provided rather than transport by the Council. 186 chose to provide comment. 53 comments were received from those respondents who said yes. The following provides a summary of these comments:

1. **Cost-effectiveness:** Many respondents believe that PTB could be a cost-effective solution if it covers the true cost of a student getting to school and back, and if it is cheaper than other transport options.
2. **Suitability:** Some respondents highlight that PTB might not be suitable for all families, especially those with complex needs or those who live in areas with no public bus services. It should be assessed against the needs of the child and local factors.
3. **Workability:** Several respondents express concerns about the workability of PTB. They mention that it should be easy to understand and use, and it should not put pressure on families. If parents can't organise something, the council should provide transport instead.
4. **Alternatives:** Some respondents suggest alternatives such as schools and colleges having their own PTB transport, or a taxi service for those who can't drive or travel by bus.
5. **Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND):** Some respondents specifically mention that PTB should be considered for children with SEND where use of standard transportation is not practicable.
6. **Administration:** A few respondents raise concerns about the administration of PTB. They question how much the assessment would cost and whether it would really save money.
7. **Eligibility:** Some respondents believe that more people should be eligible for PTB, while others express concerns that only those on benefits would benefit.
8. **Personal Choice:** Some respondents see PTB as offering personal choice to families.
9. **Council's Role:** Some respondents believe that the council should be more business-minded and fund the most cost-efficient provision. They also suggest that the council should provide transport if PTB is not suitable or if parents can't organise something.

10. **Unknowns:** Some respondents admit they do not have enough knowledge about PTB and would like more information.

Twenty-one respondents said that they have no opinion but gave comments summarised below:

1. **Economic Impact:** Some respondents express concern about the financial burden this policy could place on parents, particularly if it restricts their ability to work elsewhere due to transport responsibilities.
2. **Fairness:** There are concerns about the fairness of the policy, particularly in relation to the costs for different families and the potential for the policy to be applied selectively.
3. **Practicality:** Some respondents question the practicality of the policy, particularly for families with children at different schools or for those without the means to transport their children.
4. **Policy Administration:** There are concerns about how the policy will be administered and the potential costs of this administration.
5. **Need for Flexibility:** Many respondents suggest that the policy should be applied flexibly and on a case-by-case basis.
6. **Council Responsibility:** Some respondents believe that the council should fully fund transport, without parents having to consider budgets.
7. **Lack of Understanding:** A few respondents express a lack of understanding about the policy and its potential financial impact on them.
8. **Need for Consultation:** Some respondents call for more consultation with parents and carers on what would be suitable.

The majority of the 110 comments received for respondents who said no to this question were about...

1. **Concerns about feasibility:** Many respondents mention the difficulty of parents transporting their children to school due to work commitments, lack of a car, or living in a remote location with poor public transport links.
2. **Financial implications:** There are worries about the cost of petrol, the financial burden on families, and the potential for fraudulent claims. Some suggest that the proposed system of means testing would cost more to administer than the current system.
3. **Environmental impact:** Several responses highlight the potential increase in pollution and traffic congestion if more parents are driving their children to school.
4. **Safety and suitability:** Some respondents express concern about the safety of vulnerable children, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They question who would assess the suitability of each young person for independent travel.
5. **Equality and fairness:** There are calls for all children to have equal access to transport, regardless of their needs or family income. Some respondents feel that the proposal unfairly benefits certain groups over others.
6. **Council responsibilities:** Many responses criticize the council for not considering residents' situations and for potentially wasting resources. They argue that the council has a duty to provide safe, efficient transport and to support SEND children.
7. **Alternative suggestions:** Some respondents propose alternatives, such as providing a dedicated, affordable school bus, offering an interest-free payment

option for travel costs, or giving students a bus pass. They argue that these solutions would be more practical, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly.

8. **Council's Decision:** The council is criticized for being short-sighted and not proactive in their decision-making.
9. **Increased Traffic:** The reduction in services could lead to increased traffic during school pick-up and drop-off times, which is already a challenge. There are also concerns about the environmental impact of this increased traffic.
10. **Access to Education:** There is a strong belief that access to education should be free and that the council should provide suitable transport services, especially in areas where public transport is limited or non-existent during school times.
11. **Cost Implications:** Concerns are raised about the financial burden on families, particularly those who might not be able to afford alternative transport options. There is a call for the council to increase the amount allocated for these services.
12. **Discrimination:** There is a perception that the decision unfairly benefits certain groups at the expense of others, leading to increased education opportunity access for those groups.
13. **Responsibility of the Council:** The council is seen as having a responsibility to provide this service, with tax money being suggested as a potential source of funding.
14. **Questioning the Calculation:** The calculation of costs for students is questioned, with a specific example given of the charge for Silverstone students. The text asks how the council can justify charging £1000 per school year to parents when their own calculations suggest a much lower cost.

### **3.4 Personal Travel Budget (PTB) for Sole Transport**

In certain cases, it may be appropriate to provide a PTB, for those assessed as eligible for travel assistance, to students to travel on their own. This could be because the student lives in a rural area where no other students need transport, or they could have a high medical need and need to be transported on their own.

The Council currently provides a PTB for sole transport when this is requested by the parent or carer and where it represents a more efficient use of Council resources.

Where sole transport is needed, travel assistance will be limited to the provision of a Personal Travel Budget unless in exceptional circumstances. This is because sole transport is often the most expensive transport for the Council to arrange and can often be sourced by parents or carers at a lower cost.

In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible for parents or carers to provide transport themselves or source suitable arrangements, then transport will be provided by the Council.

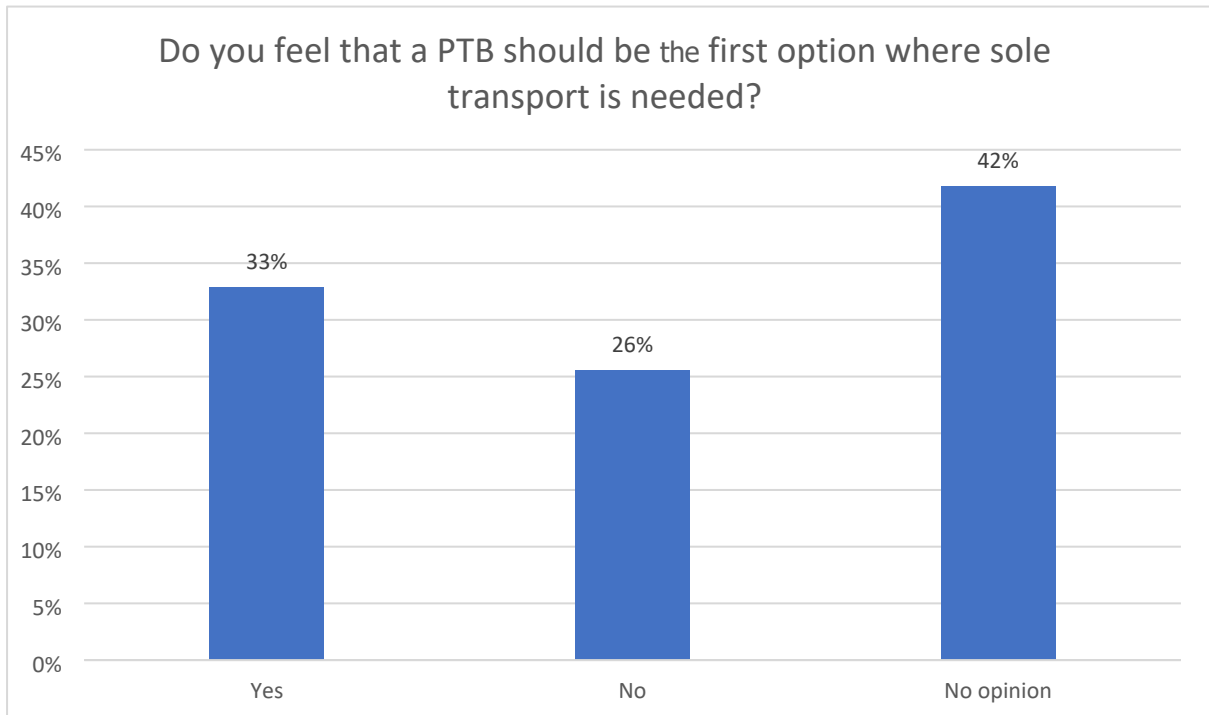
**The proposal is to make a PTB the first offer instead of the Council providing transport, where it is better value for money for the Council.**

603 chose to answer this question.

#### **Table 12**

Response	Count	Per cent (%)
Yes	198	30
No	154	34
No opinion	252	35

**Chart 3**



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal that a PTB should be the first option where sole transport is needed. 258 chose to provide comments. 35 comments were received from those respondents who said yes. The following provides a summary of these comments:

1. **Necessity of Transport:** There's a consensus that children and young adults need to be able to get to their educational needs, and this needs to be provided one way or another.
2. **Support for Families:** Clear individual assessment and support for families to source transport is essential, as it can alleviate the stress and burden on parents, especially those in rural areas where taxi services may be scarce.
3. **Consideration of Needs:** The requirement for trained/escort staff should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and arrangements should be appropriate to the needs of the student and their parents.
4. **Access to Learning:** All children should have access to learning, and barriers should not be put in their way. This includes considering the cost of transport and ensuring it is affordable.
5. **Exceptional Circumstances:** Some believe that transport should be provided in exceptional circumstances only, while others argue for more relaxed eligibility criteria.
6. **Parental Responsibility:** There are differing views on parental responsibility, with some arguing that parents should be responsible for their children's transport, especially if they are not low income.

7. **Rural Considerations:** Those living in rural areas or remote locations, where public transport may be non-existent, express a particular need for transport provision.
8. **Discrimination:** There's a strong sentiment that no youngster should be discriminated against their right to education, and creative ways to support their education should be explored.

Seventeen respondents said that they have no opinion but gave comments summarised below:

1. **Equality:** The respondents believe that budget, discounts, and facilities should be equal regardless of disability, ability, or income. The council should allocate the budget and transport subsidy equally among all students.
2. **Lack of Information:** Some respondents express that they can't answer certain questions due to a lack of information about how personal budgets can be used for transport.
3. **Dependent on Circumstances:** Many responses indicate that decisions should depend on individual circumstances and family situations. There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.
4. **Parent/Carer Consultation:** The council should support whatever the parents/carers deem to be in the best interest of their child. Parents and carers should be consulted on what they feel would benefit them.
5. **Case-by-Case Review:** Solutions should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, not as a default position.
6. **Transport Options:** Some suggest options like taxis or a Personal Transport Budget (PTB), but also note that these might work in some circumstances but not others.
7. **Uncertainty:** Some respondents are unsure how certain measures would impact or benefit their children.

The majority of the 41 comments received for respondents who said no to this question were about...

1. **Barrier to Learning:** School transport issues are seen as a barrier to learning. Concerns are raised about potential abuse and fraud in the system.
2. **Parental Choice:** Respondents believe parents should have the choice in deciding the mode of transport for their children. There is a consensus against having a first or second option imposed.
3. **Cost and Accessibility:** The cost of school transport, especially in rural areas, is considered outrageous. There is a strong call for free school transport for all students.
4. **Efficiency and Safety:** The idea of sole transport for one child is criticized for being inefficient and potentially unsafe. The preference is for multiple children to be transported together to the same place or transport link.
5. **Council Responsibility:** There is a strong belief that the council should pay for all students to access their educational setting, irrespective of their additional needs. The council is also expected to arrange and pay for the transport due to safeguarding concerns.
6. **Case-by-Case Review:** Many respondents suggest that decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, considering the unique circumstances of each student and their family.

7. **Government Role:** If the government wants children to stay in education until they are 18, then it should make suitable provision for them to do so, regardless of where they live or their personal household financial status.
8. **Special Needs Consideration:** All options need to be looked at for students, especially those with high medical needs or other complex and physical needs. This includes the need for more medical training for Transport Assistants.
9. **Resource Utilization:** There is a concern about the unnecessary waste of resources in the current system. The use of public funds for one child travelling to a specialist school is questioned.
10. **Safeguarding:** There are concerns about support and safeguarding for vulnerable children, especially when considering options like private car hire or taxis.

### 3.5 Support for young adults undertaking an apprenticeship

The current policy makes no provision for travel assistance to young adults aged 16-19 undertaking an apprenticeship.

Providing the student is eligible for free travel assistance under the existing criteria; **The Council's proposal is to offer support by way of a Personal Travel Budget to the education setting however in exceptional circumstances transport may be provided by the Council.**

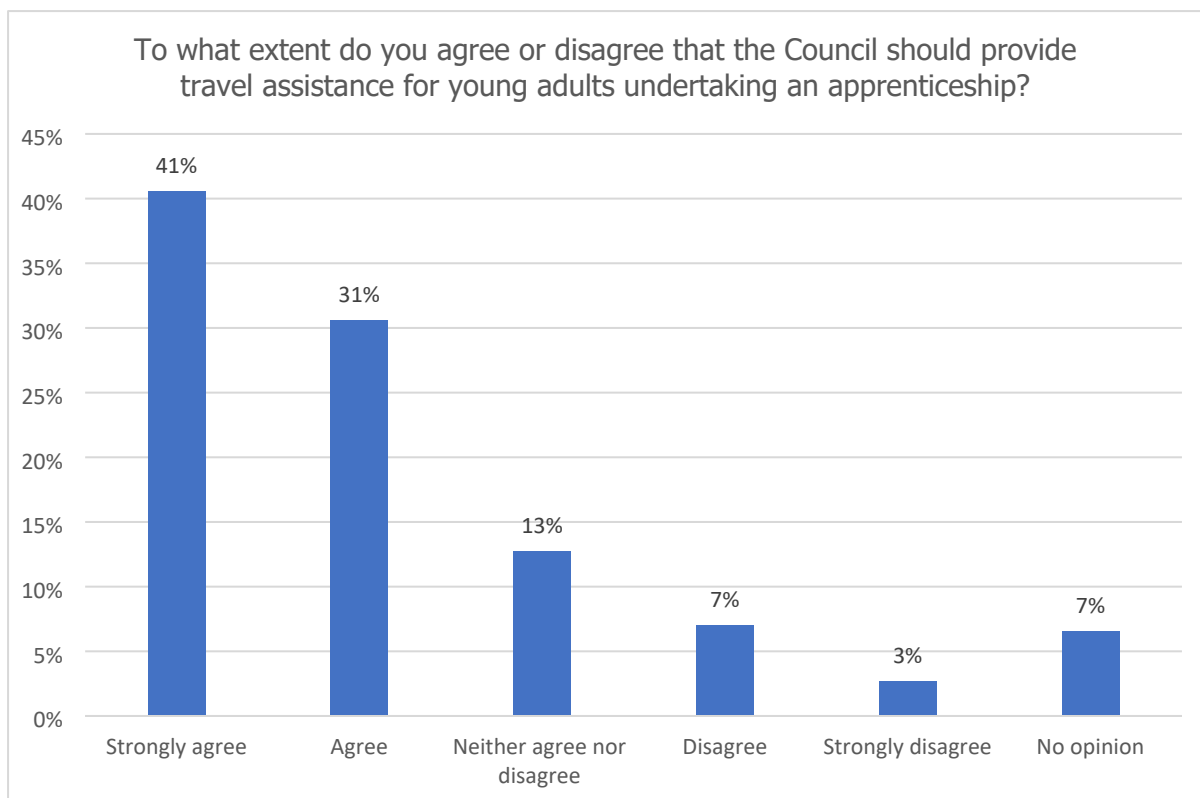
Exceptional circumstances are where it is not possible for the parent/carer to arrange or provide transport themselves. Travel assistance will not be provided to the workplace setting.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the proposal to increase the annual fee for the discretionary provision for non-entitled school travel assistance to help meet the cost of providing the service. There were 599 responses to this question with 426 stating they strongly agreed or agreed, and 58 strongly disagreed or disagreed.

**Table 13, To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should provide travel assistance for young adults undertaking an apprenticeship?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Per cent (%)</b>
Strongly agree	243	41
Agree	183	31
Neither agree nor disagree	76	13
Disagree	42	7
Strongly disagree	16	3
No opinion	39	7

#### Chart 4



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal to provide travel assistance for young adults undertaking an apprenticeship. 185 chose to provide comment. 130 comments were received from those respondents who said they agreed strongly or agreed. The following provides a summary of these comments:

1. **Mandatory Education:** Since education or training is compulsory until the age of 18, it's argued that support should be provided to enable attendance.
2. **Equal Opportunities:** Many believe that all forms of education, including apprenticeships, should be equally supported. This includes providing transport assistance regardless of whether the student is in a traditional academic setting or an apprenticeship.
3. **Financial Considerations:** Given the low wages typically associated with apprenticeships, many feel that expecting these individuals to bear the full cost of transportation is unfair. Some suggest that discounts or subsidies should be provided.
4. **Rural Accessibility:** For those living in rural areas with limited public transport, the need for transportation assistance is particularly acute.
5. **Investment in the Future:** Several comments highlight the importance of viewing such support as an investment in the future workforce, rather than a drain on current resources.
6. **Special Needs:** Some comments mention the specific needs of students with disabilities or special educational needs, arguing that these individuals may require additional support to access workplace settings.
7. **Inequity in Current Support:** There's a perception of unfairness in the current system, with some students receiving more support than others. This is seen as particularly problematic given the government's push for more vocational training and apprenticeships.

Eighteen respondents who said that they neither agree nor disagree provided comments that

1. **Individual Circumstances:** The decision should be based on individual circumstances, including whether the apprenticeship is paid or voluntary.
2. **Employer Responsibility:** Some believe that employers who hire apprentices should cover their transport costs.
3. **Local Authority Support:** Others suggest that paid apprenticeships should see less support from local authority budgets.
4. **Income-Based Contribution:** If the apprenticeship is a paid learning route, a contribution could be offered based on the income.
5. **Parental Responsibility:** Some argue that parents or carers should arrange transport for their children, especially if the apprenticeship is part of a school program.
6. **Equality Among Students:** All families should be treated the same, irrespective of whether they are attending school or an apprenticeship.
7. **Consideration During Application:** Parents and students should consider transport when applying for a college or apprenticeship.
8. **Universal Assistance:** If assistance is provided to apprentices, it should be extended to all students aged 16-18.

Thirty-three comments were received for respondents who strongly disagree or disagree:

1. **Apprentices Should Pay:** Many believe that since apprentices are paid, they should be responsible for their own transport costs. This includes using public transport, driving, or arranging rides with parents. Some argue that paying for transport is part of the transition into the working environment.
2. **Employers Should Contribute:** Some suggest that employers, who benefit from the apprentice's work, should contribute to transport costs. This could be a part of the apprenticeship agreement.
3. **Council Support:** A few respondents feel that council funds should prioritize full-time students who have no income, rather than apprentices who earn a wage. However, others argue that if free transport is provided to college, it should also be provided to the workplace.
4. **Equality with Students:** Some respondents believe that apprentices should not be treated differently from students taking A-levels or other courses. If the apprentice is over 18 and earning, they could be asked for a small contribution, otherwise, transport should be free.
5. **Parents' Role:** Some parents feel they should not have to fund transport for other people's children. They believe parents should make provisions for their own children's transport.
6. **Logistical Considerations:** A few respondents point out that providing transport for apprenticeships can be logistically inefficient compared to school runs, as apprentices are not traveling en masse to the same location.

Four comments were received from respondents that had no opinion or did not answer the question:



1. **Employers:** there should be provision for young people on an apprenticeship to receive travel cost assistance if their employer or training provider does not offer this.

### 3.6 Transport only for normal start and finish times

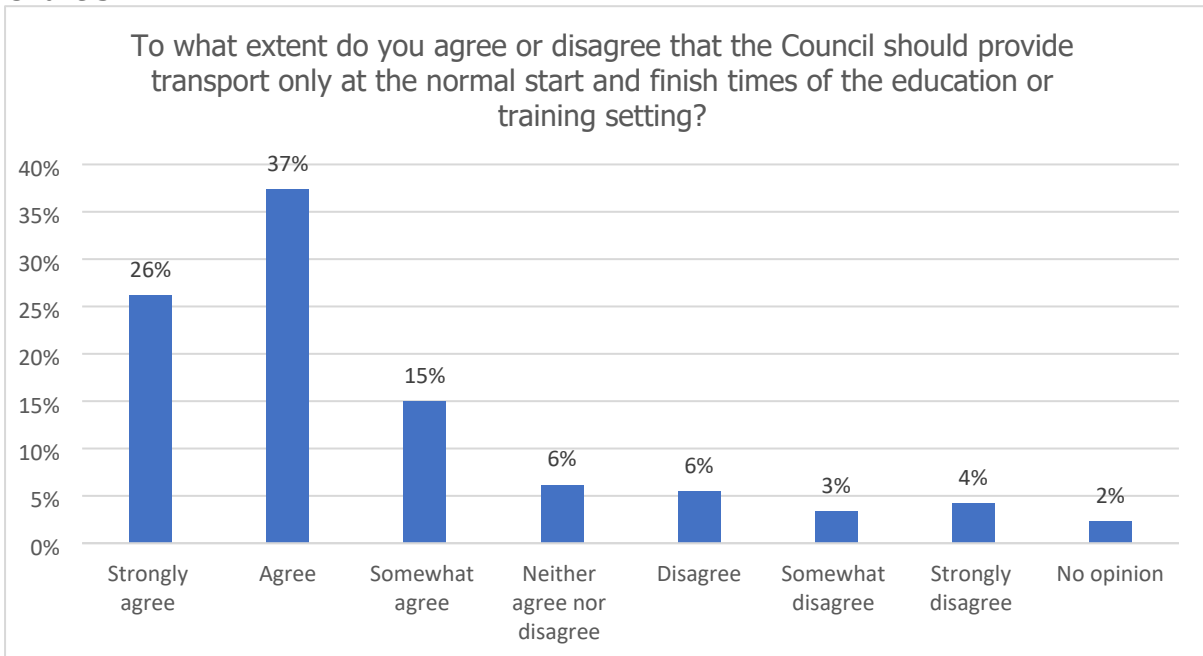
The current policy explains that all transport for Post-16's will be provided at the beginning and end of each day during term time only, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This allows the Council to plan and co-ordinate transport efficiently. The proposal is to keep this arrangement and the Council will review the timings at the start of each academic year.

**Table 14, To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Council should provide transport only at the normal start and finish times of the education or training setting.**

600 respondents chose to answer this question.

Response	Count	Per cent (%)
Strongly agree	157	26
Agree	224	37
Somewhat agree	90	15
Neither agree nor disagree	37	6
Disagree	33	6
Somewhat disagree	20	3
Strongly disagree	24	4
No opinion	14	2

**Chart 5**



Respondents were asked to provide any comments on the proposal to provide transport at the normal start and finish times of education or training. 135 chose to provide comment. 83 comments were received from those respondents who said they agreed strongly, agreed, or somewhat agreed. The following provides a summary of these comments:

1. **Timetables:** Majority agree that transport should be provided at the start and end of the school day, aligning with the school's timetable. A few respondents suggest that these cases might require more flexible transport times.
2. **Extra-curricular activities:** Concerns are raised about the impact on students' participation in extra-curricular activities. Some suggest that transport should be flexible to accommodate extra-curricular activities. Others argue that extra-curricular activities are optional, and parents should arrange transport in these cases.
3. **Provision by educational establishments:** Some respondents suggest that schools and colleges could provide their own transport.
4. **Multiple provisions:** Some respondents express concerns about the cost of providing transport at multiple times.

Eight respondents who said that they neither agree nor disagree provided comments that:

1. **Extra-curricular activities:** The impact of limited extracurricular opportunities for children from low-income families on their mental health, university choices, employment opportunities, and social mobility.
2. **Assessments:** The need for a proper assessment of the cost-effectiveness of multiple buses.
3. Uncertainty about the effect of these transportation changes on higher education timetables.
4. **Out-of-hours transport:** The disadvantage faced by students who lack resources for transportation outside of normal school hours.
5. **Extension and funding:** The possibility of slightly extending the transportation times, depending on available funds. The wish for the Council to be more generous despite economic reasons.
6. **Majority rules:** The belief that transportation should be provided for the majority start and end times of students.
7. **Assumptions:** The assumption that this was already the case.

Forty-four comments were received for respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, or somewhat disagree:

1. **Limited Participation in Extra-Curricular Activities:** The lack of flexible transportation options limits students' ability to participate in after-school activities, enrichment activities, and extra-curricular support.
2. **Challenges for SEN Children and Disabled Parents:** SEN children often need reduced hours, which can happen without much notice, leaving parents stuck if they work. The system seems to discriminate against disabled parents who are unable to drive, affecting their child's extracurricular education.
3. **Impact on Education and Well-being:** Students may miss out on important enrichment to school life beyond academic lessons due to the lack of transport offered outside of school hours. This could impact their grades and overall well-being.
4. **Need for Flexibility:** The transport provision needs to be appropriately timed to not limit the educational opportunities of the young person. There should be availability when students come back from excursions with school, and there should be an option to come home earlier if the day is done.

5. **Concerns for Post-16 Education:** Post-16 arrangements are not so simply timetabled. Some students will absent themselves if they have little tuition timetabled on a particular day leading to lower participation and completion rates.
6. **Cost Concerns:** If parents are paying for a pass, there should be more services provided to justify the cost. Providing transport only at start and end of day effectively ensures that children can't participate in extra curriculum activities due to cost.
7. **Suggestions for Improvement:** Suggestions include challenging the disability bus pass parameters, providing free bus passes for children between the ages of 11 and 16 attending secondary education, and putting on later buses to allow students to attend extra-curricular after-school activities.

### 3.7 Further comments

Respondents were invited to provide further views or comments on the Post-16 Transport Policy, that they had not already told us about. There were 164 comments that make up the following summary.

1. **Financial Burden:** Many respondents highlight the financial strain the increase would cause, especially for families already struggling with living costs. The proposed increase is seen as unaffordable and discriminatory against lower-income families and those living in rural areas. Some suggest a smaller increase or a staggered increase over several years. The increase in charges could prohibit some children from attending school, as families are already struggling with the cost of living and do not have additional income to cover these costs.
2. **Educational Access:** Respondents argue that the increase could deter students from pursuing further education, contradicting the mandate for post-16 education. They suggest that the government should subsidize these costs.
3. **Transport Quality:** Concerns are raised about the quality of transport services, with calls for regular checks and reviews. Some respondents also suggest alternatives like pay-on-the-day options or personal transport budgets for adults over 25.
4. **Policy Criticisms:** The consultation process is criticized as a 'tick box exercise', with fears that negative feedback will be ignored. Respondents also express frustration at the perceived lack of support for students with additional needs.
5. **Long-term Impact:** Some respondents argue that the policy is short-sighted, potentially leading to higher costs in the future due to reduced access to education. They advocate for investment in education and transport as a means to support future economic growth.
6. **Payment Flexibility:** There are calls for more flexible payment options, such as direct debit payments in instalments from the start of September, instead of a large bill in January.
7. **Equality:** Respondents believe that transport subsidies should be allocated equally among all students, regardless of disability, ability, or income. They also suggest that transport availability should not change just because students turn 16.
8. **Alternatives:** Suggestions include 'pay as you go' options, discounts for families with multiple children in further education, and only usable bus passes at relevant times of the day.
9. **Environmental Impact:** There are worries about increased traffic and pollution if more parents resort to driving their children to school due to the cost increase.
10. **Council Responsibility:** Some comments question the council's decision-making process, asking for full cost breakdowns and suggesting that the increase is a form

of tax. There's a call for the council to consider the wider impact of the increase on families and communities.

11. **Lack of Alternatives:** There is a poor bus service serving local villages, and there are no alternative transport options, especially for students who need to travel to colleges outside their local area.
12. **Communication and Consultation:** There is criticism of the lack of direct communication about the price increase, and a call for face-to-face consultation due to digital poverty.
13. **Government Responsibility:** Some comments argue that the government or schools should cover the cost of transport, as education is compulsory for students up to the age of 18.

The last question sought detail about how the respondent heard about the consultation. There were 576 responses to this question, and respondents could choose more than one answer. The most prevalent method of hearing about the consultation was from schools or other education provider (347), followed by social media (145), 17 from a WN Councillor, via an e-mail alert from their local council (25), 15 via the WN E-newsletter, from local media e.g. newspaper or radio (14), 6 respondents are members of the WN Consultation Register, a school transport provider (5), 1 respondent found out as a member of the WN Residents Panel, and 1 via a voluntary sector organisation.

#### **4 Written responses**

There were 6 written responses received by email from parents. The following provides an overview of the written comments provided in this way.

- Requests for additional information on Personal Budgets
- The choice is being taken away from children, young people, parents, and carers which will impact on education, general health, mental health, and wellbeing.
- The cost of proposals is too much, not proportionate to inflation.
- The proposals will detrimentally impact working parents/carers who cannot afford to pay the increased buss pass and will therefore have to drop their working hours to take their children to and from school/college.
- The price increase will create a barrier to education for young people.
- As young people now must stay in education till 18, free transport should be provided.

#### **5 Feedback from consultation events**

There were 2 drop-in sessions arranged at Guilsborough Academy which were attended by approx. 11 parents in total. The feedback from parents has been recorded separately with the responses consistent with that received via the online questionnaire.

End of report