

Equality Impact Assessment Form

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

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Directorate: Children and Young People	Date of Assessment: 18 th January 2011 Reviewed 7 th March 2011

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Is this new or an existing one? Home to school transport – this is a review of existing policy to reduce entitlement in five areas of discretionary transport. Proposals include:

- **Faith:** Stopping free transport for catholic children to catholic schools. Transport is currently provided to around 620 catholic pupils but not to other faiths.
- **Grammar:** Stopping free transport to selective schools. Transport is currently provided to around 600 pupils living in the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Stroud districts only.
- **Catchment:** Only providing transport to the nearest school, where children live in a joint school catchment area. Some children live in areas with a choice of secondary school and receive transport to either, even though one may not be their nearest school.
- **Post 16:** Provide transport only to the nearest post-16 provision. There are an increasing number of applications for longer, more costly journeys. Most needs should be able to be met locally. Review of LA subsidy which could increase student contribution rate in line with other authorities and rising transport costs.
- **Transport for non-entitled pupils:** Transport for non-entitled pupils: Tighten the rules for applying policy in areas such as available routes, SEN and school reorganisation. In specific circumstances the law expects travel assistance to be provided to non-entitled pupils. In others, assistance is the result of local custom and practice.

Where there is a statutory responsibility on the Council to provide assisted transport, this will not change.

3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

The proposed revisions of policy aim to promote a more fair and less complex service to users of Council funded home to school transport, whilst adhering to Meet the Challenge targets for reducing cost to the Council as a whole.

4. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

Parents: a fairer system for all; allowing parents to have access to simple and complete information which will allow them to make informed choices for their children's education
Gloucestershire County Council: lower costs, reduced administration, fewer appeals and complaints

5. What outcomes are expected?

Fewer children being entitled to free transport

Simplified system so that parents can understand, before they choose a school, the cost implications of doing so.

Bring the Council policy up to date and enable it to be consistent across the county

Achieve savings for the foreseeable future

A difficult transition from free to paid transport for those affected, albeit that it is likely to apply to new applicants only; there will be a safety net for low income families; and we shall broker arrangements to continue existing transport where schools and parents want it.

6. Have you consulted on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function?

Yes.

Briefings took place with school Head Teachers (Primary faith and Secondary selective and faith) to alert them to the proposed changes. Internally, SEN team and Traveller education services kept informed of the proposed changes. Youth MP's also informed. Facebook page opened to discuss proposals.

Consultation took place between 29th November 2010 and 14th January 2011 in the form of drop-in meetings at schools throughout the county. These meetings took place from 3pm to 8pm at schools selected to ensure maximum geographic coverage and to reflect where the bulk of affected pupils attend. GCC staff were on hand to answer general questions and were able to answer most questions to the satisfaction of the requestors.

Meetings were publicised through local media, GCC website, libraries, through schools and in some cases direct letters to parents affected by proposed changes in Sept 2011. Information was available from the website and was also downloadable. Copies of consultation documents and responses sheets were e-mailed to all schools in Gloucestershire to distribute to interested parties. There was also provision for requests to be made for the documents to be translated into different languages or Braille/large print upon request. A Freepost number was also set up for those people who wanted to complete hard copies. The GCC Contact Centre were also sent copies of the documents and briefed regarding the calls that they may receive. We also worked in partnership with schools, to identify any parents where special provisions needed to be made.

The number of responses to the proposals through the website and by letter, and the number of attendees at the events was poor. In total 81 people responded.

Governors of the schools most affected confirmed that the Council had, in their view, done everything possible to raise awareness of the proposals and invite responses through a variety of channels. Poor weather and the time of year could have been factors in the low turnout at open meetings but this seems unlikely as we also set up electronic and postal response forms to allow people who were unable to get to a drop in session to register an opinion. Uptake here was also low.

Of those people who did respond, the queries mainly related to issues over SEN transport and how it would be affected. These tended to be individualised questions which were responded to formally. Questions also arose relating to available routes and whether support for these would be withdrawn. We expected the responses to mainly come from the withdrawal of faith and selective transport, but this did not prove to be the case. Around a quarter of the responses received were in fact supportive of the changes that were proposed.

7. What evidence has been used for this assessment: e.g. Research, previous consultations, MAIDEN?

Pupil number data was based on current qualifying pupils from and costs on actual payments from 2009 and the first quarter of 2010. Responses from consultation events (electronic, letter, verbal).

8. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?

Please evidence that you have used the Consultation toolkit and planning template <http://staffnet/index.cfm?articleid=5203>

	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Evidence
Age			✓	Revisions to policy will have no differential impact on children or young people of different ages.
Disability			✓	We will continue to make an individual assessment of the transport needs of children and young people with disabilities. The assessment will take account of other provision made to the family for the pupil's benefit (e.g. Motability car). Transport will only be provided to the nearest educational establishment appropriate to their needs.
Gender			✓	Revisions to policy will not have any impact on one gender over another.
Race including Gypsy & Traveller			✓	Revisions to the policy would not discriminate against one particular racial group over another.
Religion or Belief			✓	The revised policy specifically sets out to remove inconsistencies in entitlement based on faith and locally agreed arrangements which may be seen as unfair or discriminatory. New pupils attending Catholic schools will no longer be supported on faith grounds, although pupils from low income families will continue to receive statutory consideration if they choose provision on grounds of faith. It is important to note that pupils currently receiving assisted travel will continue to do so until they reach statutory school leaving age (or unless their circumstances change). This only affects new starters and then only on a phased basis.
Sexual Orientation			✓	The policy does not currently, nor will it, discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Transgender			✓	The policy does not currently, nor will it, discriminate against any transgender persons.
Other groups: e.g. Rural Isolation, Long term unemployed, Deprivation Health Inequality			✓	Children and young people living in rural areas will continue to receive transport assistance if they attend their nearest school and live beyond the statutory distance (2 miles for infants, 3 miles for junior or secondary pupils). Arrangements for low income families will remain unchanged and Post 16 students will either continue to receive their Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or be entitled to a bursary to help with transport costs which will ensure any increase in student contribution does not restrict access to Post 16 education for these students. Rural families living within the statutory distances but on potentially dangerous walking routes to school may find these are appraised more carefully and reviewed more frequently. As all new Post 16 students will be required to make the same level of contribution, those living in rural areas will not be disadvantaged by higher transport costs.
Community Cohesion	<p>Describe how the proposed activity, policy, strategy, service, procedure or function will contribute to Community Cohesion.</p> <p>You will need to consider;</p> <p>Is there equality between those who will and won't benefit from the proposal?</p> <p>Are there strong relationships between groups and communities in the area affected and will the proposed action promote positive relationships?</p> <p>Does the proposal bring groups / communities into increased contact with each other</p>			<p>The catholic community may well feel that its wish to provide collective worship and educate children within the faith will be undermined by this withdrawal of free transport. Assistance will not be removed however for those currently receiving it; only new starters will be affected and then on a phased basis.</p> <p>However, the current arrangements for home to school transport exhibit major inequalities and anomalies. While there is likely to be some opposition, overall this policy should enhance fairness across all interested parties.</p>

9. If you have identified a negative impact in question 8, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?

Please indicate whether these actions will be carried forward into level 2 or level 3 business plans.

Actions:	How was/will this action be Monitored/Evaluated	When will policy / service / strategy / procedure / function be reviewed?	Carried to Level 2?	Carried to Level 3?
<p>1. School representatives, Diocese representatives, Chairs of Governors all met with Council for a briefing and were supplied with consultation documentation after Cabinet meeting. Primary age pupil parents and year 5's were informed via letter sent during consultation period.</p>	<p>Identified affected schools. Worked with schools to ensure changes are communicated effectively by giving them details of what should be said to parents and to signpost correctly. Schools visited at the end of consultation to work through possible options.</p>	<p>Reviewed at end of consultation.</p>		
<p>2. Full consultation with interested parties.</p>	<p>Numbers at meetings monitored. Feedback responses encouraged and evaluated. Draft policy wording to be published on website and open for public to comment upon.</p>	<p>Consultation ended 14 Jan 11, findings to be compiled and analysed by 21st Jan 2011.</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N</p>
<p>3. Ensure that wherever possible parents and schools have the opportunity to continue running existing transport on a paid-for basis or are signposted to sustainable alternatives such as car sharing or cycling/walking. Currently meeting Head Teachers/Bursars at affected schools to</p>	<p>Will be monitored throughout the 5 year transition period as existing entitled pupils move out of the system and new pupils examine travel options.</p>	<p>After 5 years</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>N</p>

discuss proposals for the future.				
4. Promote statutory provision for low income families to ensure maximum take-up.	Monitor numbers, especially those previously entitled under alternative discretionary arrangements.	Annually	N	N

Declaration

We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy/service and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.

We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the County Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment

Completed by:

Date:

Role:

Countersigned by Head of Service

Date:

Date for Review:

Please forward an electronic copy to the Equalities Team by emailing

equalities@gloucestershire.gov.uk

The original signed hard copy and electronic copy should be kept with your team for audit purposes.