



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**

Equality Impact Assessment

1: Background

Requirement	Detail
Title of proposal	Changes to the Home to School Transport Policies for academic year 2024
Type of proposal: new policy / change to policy / new service / change to service / removal of service / project	Changes to policy
Directorate	Place and Economy
Service area	Highways and Waste/ Home to School Transport
Lead Officer's name	Rachel Mawson
Lead Officer's job title	Transport Delivery Manager
Officer who completed Equality Screening Assessment	Rachel Mawson
Equality Screening Assessment completion date	16 March 2023
Date Director informed of full assessment requirement	17 March 2023
Equality Impact Assessment completion date	19 June 2023

2: Legal Requirements

The Equality Act (2010) places a general duty on all public bodies to have `due regard` to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Foster good relations.
- Advance the opportunity of equality.

Equality Impact Assessments help us evidence that we have met the requirements of the General Equality Duty. As a local authority we also have a specific duty to publish information about people who are affected by our policies and practices. All Equality Impact Assessments will be published with the Equality Screening Assessment (ESA) on the [North Northamptonshire Council website](#).

3: Proposal Details

Description of the proposal:

1. Reword and reformat the policy to increase accessibility and make it easier to understand.
2. Ceasing to treat Linked schools as the nearest suitable school for free transport where there is another school closer.
3. Amendments to the provision of discretionary transport to
 - a. Those of statutory school age (5 to 16 years of age)
 - b. Students attending Sixth Form Studies (16 to 18 years of age)
 - c. Withdrawal of the guaranteed seat for those applying early
 - d. Increase of financial contribution for provision of discretionary transport
4. Once an Option has been agreed, the Home to School Transport Policies will be reviewed to reflect the option and to make them Policy more accessible and easier to read.

What are the key objectives of this proposal?

1. Increase accessibility and clarity of the policy
2. Reduce or remove the financial pressures incurred by the Council in providing discretionary transport by
 - a. Restricting or removing discretionary transport provision and/or
 - b. Increasing the financial contribution paid by service users towards the cost of providing discretionary transport

Who will benefit from this proposal?

1. A) Service users and potential service users will have a better understanding of whether or not they are entitled to assistance under the policy.
B) Officers will be better able to understand the entitlement criteria leading more accurate application of the policy, in turn leading to fewer challenges against decisions.
2. The Council will reduce or eliminate the financial pressures currently incurred by the provision of discretionary transport.

What were the findings of the initial Equality Screening Assessment?

Increase in financial contributions could be detrimental to service users, especially to those already experiencing financial hardship.

Restriction or removal of discretionary transport could negatively impact access to education for those not entitled to assistance under the legislation.

Restrictions to the provision of discretionary transport will have a significant negative impact on some of those living in the former East Northants district, in particular those attending Prince William School, which has a high number of linked or feeder schools from a wide geographical area.

The proposals will have an indirect effect on children whose parents who are unable to take them to school because of a disability, but who are not entitled to free transport under the legislation.

The proposals will impact parents with full-time contracts with no flexible working options, this may have a larger impact on single parents. 78% of people in NN were in fulltime role in 2021. In the East Midlands in 2021 56% of single working families were female, and 7.2% male single parents – therefore this is likely to have a higher impact on females than males that are working single parents.

32.4% of single parent females were working part-time, and 23.6% working full-time.

16% of households in NN do not own a car/van and thus rely on public transport.

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E06000061

4: Data Evidence

What information or data, additional to that found in the ESA, have you obtained?

Consultation with service users and stakeholders took place during the Summer Term. Consultation closed on 12th June 2023.

How does this data or information help you assess the impact of the proposal on protected groups?

Responses to the consultation will enable an informed decision about whether or not to withdraw all or part of the discretionary service and/or recoup a greater proportion of the costs of service provision from the service users

On the basis of the consultation responses it is clear that the proposals will have a disproportionate effect on some residents of the former East Northants District. If these impacts are to be reduced, alternative arrangements for transport would need to be put in place.

What changes do you recommend being made to the proposal as a result of this evidence?

Members will be asked to make a decision to

- I. restrict the discretionary transport by removing the guaranteed seat provision, rather than withdraw the service completely, and
- II. to increase contributions for the remaining discretionary service, limiting that increase to bring fares back in line with commercial service prices rather than opting for full cost recovery.
- III. consider withdrawing the free transport to linked schools. Any implementation would only apply to new school placements. Existing students would continue to receive transport under the same provisions as at present to allow them to complete their schooling.

Members will be asked to consider the Equality Impacts and the data provided alongside the options given to them.

What impact could these changes have on the overall outcome of the proposal?

The proposals seek to take a balanced approach to address the impact on residents whilst also considering the need for the Council to reduce its overall expenditure on this service.

Members will be able to make an informed decision on the future of the discretionary service.

Could these changes have a negative impact on any other equality group(s)?

As above.

5: Equality Impact

Using the evidence gathered above, describe the potential negative impact this proposal may have on individuals or groups because of their characteristics in the table below. Ensure you consider different groups within each of the protected groups.

Characteristic	Potential negative impact
Age	Reduced or restricted access to discretionary transport provision for children and young people of school or sixth form age, who would otherwise not be entitled to transport under the legislation.
Disability	Reduced or restricted access to discretionary transport provision for children and young people of school or sixth form age with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities who would otherwise not be entitled to transport under the legislation. May be an impact on parents with disabilities where their child is not otherwise entitled to transport assistance.

Characteristic	Potential negative impact
Sex	Likely to have a higher impact on females than males as more than 50% of single parents are female.
Marriage or Civil Partnership	n/a
Pregnancy or Maternity	n/a
Race	n/a
Religion or Belief	n/a
Gender Reassignment	n/a
Sexual Orientation	n/a
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Reduced or restricted access to discretionary transport provision for children and young people of school or sixth form age with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities who would otherwise not be entitled to transport under the legislation. AND/OR</p> <p>Increase in contributions payable towards costs of providing discretionary transport.</p> <p>Households without access to a car or personal transport will be impacted.</p>

6: Consultation

Who has been consulted with as part of this Equality Impact Assessment?

Who was consulted?	Date(s)	Why was this group consulted?	Any negative impact on equality groups identified?	What change(s) will be made as a result of this consultation?
Parents and carers	24th April	Statutory requirement;	As set out above	Decision will be made whether to

Who was consulted?	Date(s)	Why was this group consulted?	Any negative impact on equality groups identified?	What change(s) will be made as a result of this consultation?
Schools and educational establishments Neighbouring Authorities Current and future service users and their families	2023 to 12th June 2023.	Existing and future service users and stakeholders		withdraw discretionary service in whole or part and whether to increase contributions for any remaining service.

Are further consultations planned? (Give dates, explain reason why this group is to be consulted).

none

7: Assessing the Impact

Will the negative impact identified in the ESA have been eliminated once the above changes have been implemented?

If no, an Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan must be completed to evidence how the negative impact will be mitigated, reduced and reviewed. (Please see action plan template at the end of this document).

8: Monitoring and Evaluation

What monitoring systems are in place to measure and monitor the impact that the proposals have on protected groups?

The service can monitor the number of pupils who apply for the discretionary transport, but they would not know the number of families who would like to use the service but do not apply for whatever reason. It will be difficult to measure how many people are impacted by the changes on a year by year basis as the Council will not be aware of who these people are and what alternative transport options they have.

9: Decision Making Summary

Report on impacts identified attached.

10: Authorisation

	Signature	Date
Approved by Equalities Team	Emma Freeman, Equality Officer, Corporate Services	3/7/2023
Authorised by Department Director	Graeme Kane, Executive Director Place and Economy	25/06/23

- A signed copy should be retained by the owner for audit purposes.
- A completed copy should be attached to the relevant report/policy/proposal.
- An electronic copy must be emailed to [NNC Equalities](#) be logged and published.

10: Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Negative impact	Action to eliminate or reduce negative impact.	Officer responsible	Action target date	Review outcome (has the action had the intended outcome)
Access to school/education in particular Prince William School	<p>Short term: make special arrangements outside the policy to duplicate current provision until alternatives are in place.</p> <p>Longer term: encourage development of commercial services, improve access by bike and walking</p> <p>Encourage and support school and/or parents groups to take on responsibility for own services</p>	Home to School Manager	May 2024	
Increased fares	<p>Introduce an instalment payment scheme such as monthly direct debit to spread the cost.</p> <p>Limit the increase to commercial levels.</p>	Home to School Manager	May 2024	