

Suffolk school and post-16 travel

Public consultation

12 December 2017



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Introduction

During the past five years Central Government has significantly reduced the money provided to local authorities, and we have needed to save £168 million across all our services. At the same time, we have protected home to school transport and actually increased the amount we spend by £3 million.

For some time, we have been concerned that if we do not take action, then the costs will continue to rise - this isn't something we can afford. We have already introduced a number of efficiency changes to the service saving around £2.6 million, now, like many other councils across the country, we need to make more significant changes because of the reduction in Government grants, inflation and demographic pressures. We are now spending £21 million a year just getting children to and from school. We are therefore consulting on changing our school and post-16 travel policies.

Our current policies are more generous than the law requires us to be. We currently pay to transport a number of children who we aren't legally obliged to, and we also provide transport for some children to travel further distances than we are legally required to.

When considering new school and post-16 travel policies, we need to ensure that they meet our statutory responsibility to children eligible for free school travel and that they are affordable and fit for the future. They need to meet the growing demand driven by new housing and schools, and the increasing travel needs for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Reviewing school and post-16 travel also gives us an opportunity to look at how other residents, particularly those in rural areas could benefit from buses going to and from school and post-16 colleges.

I know from listening to families and head teachers that a big concern for them is the need for children to potentially change school or college because of new travel policies being introduced. With a group of schools, we have



developed a range of potential 'local solutions' that could also help reduce the cost of school transport and potentially manage some of the impact of any changes. I would welcome your views on these local solutions and for your ideas on other possible solutions.

Before any decisions are made about the future of school and post-16 travel in Suffolk, it is important that we understand the potential impact of any proposed changes. Therefore, I urge you to have your say by Wednesday 28 February 2018 by responding to this consultation.

School and post-16 travel is a complex matter, I hope this booklet and the information at www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel will assist you to understand the challenge and then help to shape the right solution for Suffolk.

I would like to reassure you that I am committed to ensuring that all children and young people can access the education they need so they can achieve their full potential.

Cllr Gordon Jones
Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills



Background

How school and post-16 travel currently works in Suffolk

We are responsible for providing free travel for children under 8 years old to their nearest suitable school if it is over 2 miles and for 8 – 16 years old, if it is over 3 miles from their home. We currently manage and fund five million journeys each year.

At the moment we have a 'discretionary' school and post-16 travel offer as well, this means we provide a service that is above the legal requirements. You can read more about this on page 6 -7.

We also have 'exceptions' policies for both school and post-16 travel. This means that although a child or young person may not meet the main criteria required to receive free travel, they may still receive it because for example they have exceptional family circumstances. More information about the policies are available from: www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport

Children aged 5-16

Most schools in Suffolk have areas called Transport Priority Areas. This is the discretionary part of our existing policy. Transport Priority Areas are geographic areas that are used to decide which school or schools a child may get free home to school travel to and from. More information about Transport Priority Areas is on page 32.

Some schools don't have a Transport Priority Area, therefore free transport is only offered to these schools when it is the nearest school to a child's home where they meet the policy criteria.

The Transport Priority Area may be the same as the Catchment Area, however Catchment Areas have a very different purpose to Transport Priority Areas. Catchment Areas are used for admissions, they can be used to prioritise which children are offered a place at a school when there are more children applying to that school than there are places available. Not all schools that control their own admissions policy choose to use Catchment Areas in their admissions criteria.

More information about Catchment Areas is on page 30 or you can visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/school-catchment-areas.

Around 4,300 children have a more generous transport offer than we are legally require to provide.

- 2400 children to more than one school (to both their Transport Priority Area school and their nearest suitable school where both schools are further away than the statutory walking distance),
- 1300 children receive free travel to their Transport Priority Area school despite their nearest suitable school being less than the statutory walking distance from the home address,
- 600 children have more than one Transport Priority Area both are which are further away than the statutory walking distance.

Around 5,200 children are offered free travel to only one school because their Transport Priority Area school is their nearest school, and 81,500 (age 5- 16) have no entitlement or do not use the free travel service.

We don't think this is fair for all families in Suffolk and legally we are only required to provide free school travel to pupils who attend their nearest suitable school and live more than the statutory walking distance from that school. We also know that it can be very confusing that we have Transport Priority Areas and Catchment Areas, and we want to make this much more straight forward for families.

The full travel policy for children aged 5-16, is available from: <https://www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/policies-and-guidance/>

Post-16

For post-16 travel, we provide subsidised travel for young people that meet certain criteria and attend their nearest school sixth form or Post-16 centre. For students wishing to study more specialist subjects or courses which are not available at their nearest school sixth form or nearest Post-16 centre, applications are considered on an individual exceptional basis to the nearest centre offering this programme.



To support young people to access education, we also have the Endeavour Card. This is a smartcard for 16 to 19 year olds that provides a discount of at least 25% off adult fares on participating bus services.

The Endeavour Card contributes to our Raising the Bar initiative, to raise the attainment and aspiration of children and young people in Suffolk, and better match their skills with future jobs.

The full post-16 travel policy is available from: www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/getting-to-sixth-form-or-college-16-19-year-olds/

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Some children are entitled to free travel however far they live from the school if they have an Education, Health, and Care Plan or a Statement of Special Educational Needs and cannot walk because of their special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem.

For post-16 students, the post-16 travel policy applies, but a student aged 16-25 who has an Education, Health and Care Plan or a Statement of Special Educational Needs and cannot be expected to walk, accompanied as necessary because of their special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem, they may be entitled to transport irrespective of the minimum distance.

In line with our legal requirements, we individually assess children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities to ensure their travel needs are met.

If you would like to read further travel information for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities it is available from: www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/special-educational-needs-transport

Our vision is: "Suffolk residents have increased travel options and the ability to arrange their own transport to meet their needs, without public subsidy."

Over the last four years we have transformed a range of travel services so they better meet the needs of Suffolk residents. In November 2017 we started a new phase of this work, recognising that while public funding is reducing, travel options can still increase through different ways of working with bus/coach operators and new technology.

In **2016** Suffolk County Council spent a total of **£21.3m** on school travel



We want to unlock this capacity to benefit Suffolk residents



Our legal responsibilities for children age 5-16

The Education Act of 1996 requires us to transport eligible children to school for free. The Department for Education has issued guidance which, in part, details local authorities' legal obligations and, in part, good practice.

Our main requirement under section 508B of the Education Act 1996 (the Act) is to ensure there is free home to school transport for compulsory school aged children that meet certain eligibility criteria set out in Schedule 35B of the Act.

While Suffolk County Council has the duty to ensure that the legal requirements are met, we don't have to provide the service ourselves. If a third party provided transport for all eligible children, we would not need to make any further transport arrangements for these children.

It is important to note that, regardless of any agreement with a third party to provide the service, we would still have the responsibility to ensure the legal requirements are met.

Should an agreement be made by a school or multi academy trust to provide the home to school transport service, but they then later ended this agreement or failed to provide the service, we would provide what is legally required for eligible children.

We would not provide anything above the legal requirements that the school or multi academy trust may have agreed locally with families. These terms would need to be made clear in the agreement and published on both the school's and the Council's website.

The table below is a summary of the statutory eligibility for children of compulsory school age (5 to 16) and our discretionary offer.

Policy area	Legal requirement	Discretionary offer in Suffolk
a) Statutory walking distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide free transport for pupils of compulsory school age if their nearest suitable school that can accommodate them is: Beyond two miles (if below the age of 8); or Beyond three miles (if aged between 8 and 16). 	<p>Transport to the Transport Priority Area school(s) where the distance is more than two or three miles, according to age.</p> <p>Provide transport to children in the reception year group before their 5th birthday.</p> <p>Local arrangements in Bury St Edmunds, for Free Schools and to prioritise Suffolk schools.</p>
b) Unsafe route	Make transport arrangements for children (aged 5 to 16) who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to the nearest suitable school because the nature of the route is deemed unsafe to walk.	Also offer this for the Transport Priority Area school(s) whether nearest or not.
c) Special educational needs, disability or mobility issue	Make transport arrangements for all children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school, accompanied as necessary, because of their mobility problems or because of associated health and safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability.	

¹ DfE school travel guidance www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575323/Home_to_school_travel_and_transport_guidance.pdf



	Provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit if:
d) Extended rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nearest suitable school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11); the school is between two and six miles (if aged 11 to 16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools); the school is between two and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11 to 16).

The duty to provide transport to children who fall within these four categories applies regardless of the type of school the child is attending: community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, foundation, academy, free school, special school or pupil referral units.

For children with special educational needs and disabilities, this can also include an independent school where this is named on the child's Education, Health and Care Plan, or Statement of Special Educational Needs and it is the nearest of two or more schools named.

Our legal responsibilities for post-16 young people

The Education Act 1996 requires us to consider travel arrangements for young people of sixth form age and prepare a statement each year of the services it will offer. There is no legal requirement that we provide free transport for young people of sixth form age. The Department for Education has issued separate statutory guidance for transport for persons of sixth form age.²

The table below is a summary of the statutory duties of the local authority in respect of transport for young people of sixth form age (post-16) and our discretionary offer.

Policy area	Legal requirement	Discretionary offer in Suffolk
Post-16 travel	<p>There is no duty on local authorities to provide free school transport to persons of sixth form age. The Education Act 1996 requires that the Council must prepare a transport policy statement annually.</p> <p>The transport policy statement must specify the arrangements for the provision of transport that the Council considers it necessary to make for facilitating the attendance of persons of sixth form age receiving education or training at institutions.</p>	Subsidised travel to the nearest sixth form or Post-16 centre, where the student lives more than three miles away.

Suffolk County Council's current travel policies are available at: www.suffolkonboard.com/policies

² DfE Post-16 guidance www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277016/Post-16_Transport_Guidance.pdf



The challenge

All local authorities across the country continue to face significant challenges to meet frontline service requirements in a climate where there is less money and resources available.

During the past five years Central Government has significantly reduced the money provided to local authorities, and we have needed to save £168 million across all our services. At the same time, we have protected home to school transport and increased the amount we spend by £3 million. The services now cost £21 million a year.

For some time, we have been concerned that if action isn't taken, then the costs will continue to rise, this isn't something we can afford to happen. We have already introduced many efficiency changes which have avoided further increases of around £2.6 million, but now, like many other councils across the country, we need to consider making more significant changes. We are therefore consulting on changing our school and post-16 travel policies.

Further to this, our school and post-16 travel policies were set in June 2014 and therefore they no longer reflect the emerging picture in Suffolk; with new housing and schools being developed, and the increasing transport needs for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

This is a huge challenge for Suffolk and we need to work together to find solutions to make the service affordable and fit for the future.

To help guide this work we have worked with parents, schools, colleges, bus and coach operators, councillors and parish councils to develop a set of principles. The principles that people felt were most important to them are ranked as:

1. Ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people are supported to travel to school, college or place of learning.
2. Support all children and young people to become resilient, independent travellers at the right time.
3. Design new policies which support Suffolk's vision for travel and are value for money, fair and transparent.
4. Develop policies that use council tax payers' money efficiently, while ensuring that children and young people continue to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

You can see the other principles that were discussed at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel



What we have done so far

In the last two years, we have made £2.6 million savings to school and post-16 travel costs, by:

- Training students with special educational needs and disabilities to use public transport rather than rely on expensive taxis.
- Setting up a new taxi company which has reduced the cost of transporting students to a special school in Bury St Edmunds.
- Increasing the number of places for special educational needs and disabilities students to be educated in Suffolk, and therefore reducing the cost of transporting children out of county.
- Making journey planning more efficient by investing in route planning software.
- Giving selected families money to arrange or provide their own transport, rather than us arranging transport on their behalf.
- Increasing the competition between suppliers when buying school transport to help drive prices down.

What we have learnt so far

From July – November 2017 we held a pre-consultation period. We used this as a way to hear views from different people that may be impacted by the potential changes ahead of starting a public consultation. Pre-consultation is not a legal requirement but it's something we wanted to do and have found valuable.

As part of the pre-consultation we have spoken to over 200 people including parents, schools, colleges, early years providers, bus and coach operators, parish councils, young people, county councillors and Members of Parliament.

We have listened carefully and have learnt:

1. People recognise the need for money to be saved.
2. We need to consider the potential impact on children at critical points in their education.
3. The proposed changes impact urban and rural areas very differently.
4. Existing policies are complex and many people don't understand the differences between Transport Priority Areas and nearest suitable school for transport, and Catchment Areas for school admissions. This makes it difficult to understand the potential impact of change.
5. Low income families are concerned about the potential impact on them.
6. We need to consider potential impacts on strategic and financial planning for individual schools and what this would mean for staff and the use of buildings.
7. Potential changes could impact traffic congestion and have an environmental impact on surrounding areas.
8. Some routes may not be safe for pupils all year round.
9. How schools and colleges could work with us to provide a cost-efficient service and some are already coordinating travel arrangements for their pupils.
10. There is a changing role for bus and coach operators with opportunities to work better with us, schools, and families, identify new routes in response to need and administer sale of spare seats.
11. That the Endeavour Card needs to be promoted more and there needs to be consistency in the offer.
12. There is a willingness to collaborate on local solutions to save money.



Proposals: Children aged 5 to 16 years old

We are consulting on three options for how school travel could be provided for children aged 5-16 years old in the future.

A glossary of terms used is available from page 30.

Option 1

In September 2019, change the school travel policy so that it is in line with the legal requirements, all the changes would be made in one go. This means that we would:

1. Remove Transport Priority Areas and no longer provide this discretionary free transport for children aged 5-16 from September 2019.
2. Continue to provide free travel to children of compulsory school age who have a statutory entitlement (see page 6). Travel would be provided for eligible children in the term after they reach their fifth birthday.
3. Only provide free school travel to a child's school if they are living more than the statutory distance (2 miles for those under 8 years old, and 3 miles for 8 to 16) from their nearest suitable school to their home, regardless of whether the school is in Suffolk or in a neighbouring county.
4. Reassess families wishing to claim entitlement in relation to the Extended Rights to Low Income Transport (see page 31).
5. Ask parents to inform us if they wish their child to be assessed for free school travel, and to let us know annually that they want their child to make use of their free travel pass. Currently, all children eligible for free school travel are informed of their eligibility and we plan for them to travel regardless of whether they apply for a school bus pass.
6. Annually reassess the Extended Rights entitlement to free travel. This is because some children who currently receive transport as a result of living in a Transport Priority Area, may also qualify under the Extended Rights criteria (see page 6), which is part of the legal criteria.
7. Take Rights of Way into account when measuring distances to assess what is a child's nearest school and eligibility for travel.
8. Consider on a case by case basis, whether an exception should be made to the general policy. When considering whether to make an exception we would take into account all relevant individual child circumstances including the need to support children who are most vulnerable, such as those who come from a family that has low household income and live in a remote rural area. Exceptions to the general policy would be considered by the Individual Needs Travel Group panel.
9. Where commercially viable, open up closed routes (i.e. bus routes that at present only transport children to and from school) to the public, so funding is benefiting all residents and not just school children.
10. Have fewer closed contracts and more regular public service bus routes where parents would be able to purchase seats direct from the operator at a commercial price.
11. For surplus seats on closed contracts where routes are not commercially viable, offer spare seats for sale (subject to spare capacity) to non-eligible children and young people charged at the actual cost of providing the transport and to be sold on a first come first served basis. Currently the average cost is £960 per child per year.



12. Support families to plan their child's travel arrangements. This would include signposting parents and young people to the full range of local sustainable travel options that are available to them. For example, walking, cycling, informal car sharing, private minibus arrangements (where parents organise this), walking bus route, and Park & Stride.
13. Act as a facilitator with the commercial bus and coach operators and support schools to set up contracts.
14. In Bury St Edmunds there are both two-tier and three-tier education systems and a split site school. We would still introduce the above changes, however there would be a discretionary offer in place. This would mean that:
 - For one year only, any child who received free travel in Year 5 to a middle school in the 2018-2019 school year would continue to receive this service in Year 6, provided that they are attending their nearest middle school and that school is over three miles.
 - Where one of the St Benedict's Catholic School sites is the nearest suitable school

to the child's home, we would offer free travel for the whole secondary phase up to age 16 to St Benedict's Catholic School. That is providing the child lives more than three miles from the site which they are attending at the time.

- Where one of the St Benedict's Catholic School sites is the nearest suitable school to the child's home, we would also offer travel to the next nearest two-tier secondary school provided that the child lives more than three miles from this school.
- We would provide free school travel to children to and from the nearest suitable two-tier school, if it is located more than the statutory walking distance from their home. This would be provided even if there is a three-tier school located nearer to their home address. This is on the basis that we made the decision to operate a two-tier education system in Suffolk at the time of the School Organisational Review.



Option 2

From September 2019, introduce the changes year by year as a child joins or moves school so that it is in line with legal requirements.

This means that we would introduce all of the changes listed in Option 1 on a phased basis, year by year as a child joins or moves school (infant to junior, first to middle, junior or primary to secondary, middle to high). A child would remain eligible for transport to their current school if they are receiving free school transport in 2018 and are aged 5-16. Children joining as new entrants in September 2019 would be assessed under the new policy.

This option would cost Suffolk County Council an estimated £8.8 million to implement due to the need to provide buses going to two schools in some locations over the first 4 years of implementation.

This diagram shows which year groups in a school would be assessed under the current and proposed policies in the year shown.

Primary School

	R	1	2	3	4	5	6
2018							
2019							
2020							
2021							
2022							
2023							
2024							
2025							

Under Option 2, this would take effect from September 2019 for new applicants.

For a child starting in Reception in September 2018 they would continue to be eligible under the current policy.

A child who starts in reception in September 2019 would be considered under the new transport policy as shown in the table.

However, if a child's situation changes i.e. a change of address or school and they reapply after September 2019 the application would be assessed under the new policy.

Secondary School

	7	8	9	10	11
2018					
2019					
2020					
2021					
2022					
2023					

Key



Current policy



Option 2 proposed policy



Option 3

Make no changes to the school travel policy but make savings from other services provided by Suffolk County Council.

To continue to deliver the same policy as now, we would have to make savings from budgets supporting other services provided by Suffolk County Council or through alternative funding.

For more information on Suffolk County Council budget including how this is agreed each year please visit <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/the-budget-for-suffolk/>

The proposed changes to compulsory school age (age 5 to 16) travel would not affect:

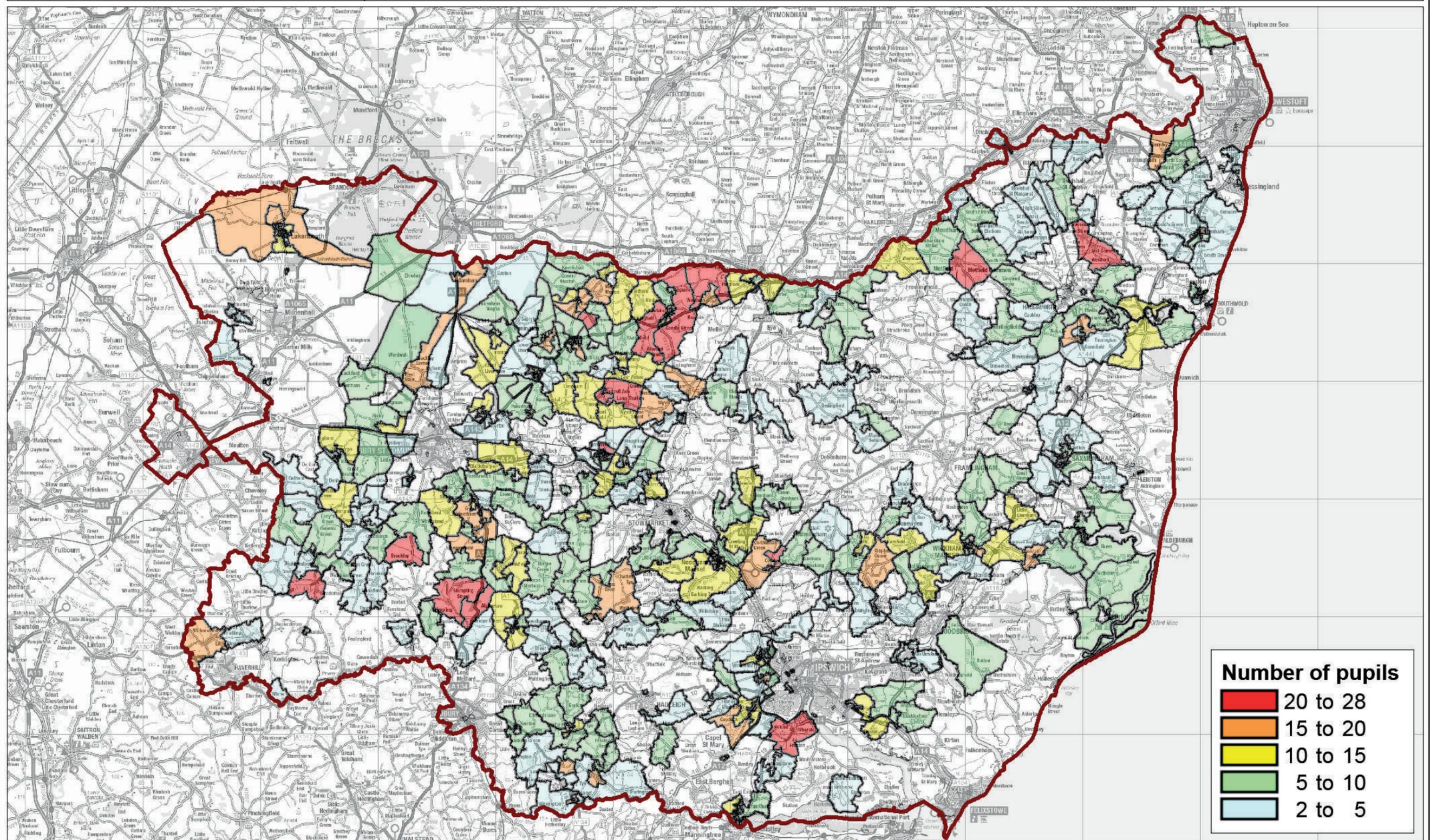
- Parents' or carers' rights to express preferences for admission to any three schools.
- The rights to free school travel if the child has a legal entitlement to it (see page 6 for the four categories of children who have an entitlement to free school transport).

Note:

- At any time when a family moves to a new house, the eligibility for transport would be reviewed based on the family's new home address and the policy in operation at that time.
- Where a family purchases a spare seat for their child with special educational needs and disabilities (where they are not eligible for free school transport), the annual contribution would continue to be aligned to the current charging arrangements. For September 2019, this charge would be £690 for the school year 2019-2020.



Indication of the potential impact for children of statutory school age, by ONS Output Area
Excluding Rights of Way. Based on September 2016 data.



Proposals: *Post-16 travel*

We are consulting on three options for how the post-16 travel offer could be provided in the future. Other elements of the post-16 travel policy statement would remain unchanged.

Post-16 means full-time learners aged 16-18 and those aged 19 and over if they are continuing on a particular course of study started before the age of 19, to attend their place of learning and for continuing learners with Educational, Health and Care Plans aged 19 to 25.

A glossary of terms used is available from page 30.

Option 1

In September 2019, change the post-16 travel policy all in one go so that it is in line with the legal requirements.

This means that we would:

1. For post-16 students, no longer provide subsidised travel to the nearest sixth form or post-16 centre (including college) over three miles.
2. Introduce an individual exceptions policy to support young people who are most vulnerable, and those that have low household income and live in an isolated rural area (over 3 miles) without alternative access solutions, with free or subsidised travel to their nearest post-16 provision.
3. Consider exceptions by the Individual Needs Travel Group panel. They would take into account other support available such as the Bursary Fund held by post-16 providers together with evidence that the young person has explored all other sustainable travel options.
4. Have fewer closed contracts and more regular public service bus routes where parents would be able to purchase seats direct from the operator at a commercial price.
5. For surplus seats on closed contracts where routes are not commercially viable, offer spare seats for sale (subject to spare capacity) to non-eligible young people charged at the actual cost of providing the transport and to be sold on a first come first served basis. Currently the average cost is £960 per year.
6. Support families to plan their child's travel arrangements. This would include signposting parents and young people to the full range of local sustainable travel options that would be available to them. For example, walking, cycling, informal car sharing, private minibus arrangements (where parents organise this), walking bus route, and Park & Stride.
7. Act as a facilitator with the bus and coach operators and support schools and colleges to set up contracts.

Option 2

For September 2019, when a post-16 student starts year 12 or changes course, assess them according to a new post-16 policy that is in line with legal requirements on a phased basis.

This means we would introduce all of the changes listed in Option 1 and assess new post-16 applicants according to the new policy for September 2019.

For those already in post-16 provision and receiving free or subsidised travel in 2018, under this option, they would remain eligible be only be assessed according to the new policy at the point they change course from September 2019.

We estimate that this would cost an estimated extra £200,000 over the first two years, because we would need to continue to subsidise the scheme.



Option 3

Make no changes to the post-16 travel policy but make savings from other services provided by Suffolk County Council.

To continue to deliver the same policy at the same level as now, we would have to make savings from budgets supporting other services provided by Suffolk County Council or through alternative funding.

For more information on Suffolk County Council budget including how this is agreed each year please visit <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/budget-council-tax-and-finance/the-budget-for-suffolk/>

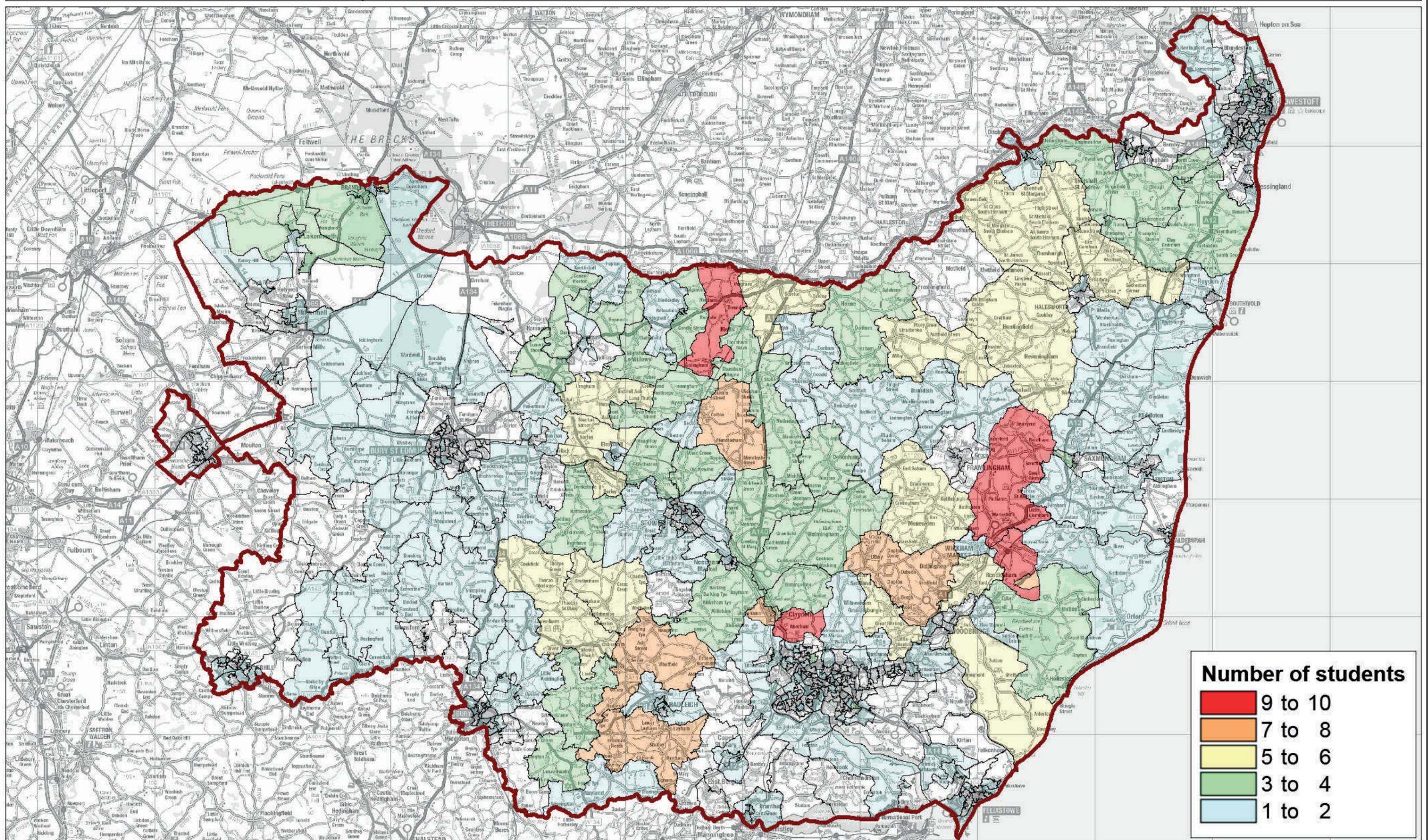
The proposed changes for post-16 travel would not affect:

- The ability of young people of sixth form age to express preferences for their choice of post-16 pathway(s).
- Those cases which have been considered on an individual basis where it is accepted by us that travel arrangements are necessary to be provided to enable the young person with special educational needs and or disabilities to access to the education they require. This applies where there is a transport requirement for young people of sixth form age with special educational needs and or disabilities, and those young adults aged 19 years and over who have started a new course at an educational placement which is named in their Education, Health and Care Plan. Further information on the travel policy is available from: www.suffolkonboard.com/home-to-school-transport/special-educational-needs-transport/

Note:

- The financial contributions required to be paid by young people of sixth form age with special educational needs and disabilities would continue to be increased on an annual basis by £30. The annual contribution for the school year starting September 2019 would be £690.
- The Endeavour Card would continue to be available to support all young people aged 16 up to the day before their twentieth birthday, with reduced price travel (at least 25% discount) on public bus routes across Suffolk where accepted by the commercial operator.
- At any time when a family moves to a new house, the eligibility for transport would be reviewed based on the family's new home address and the policy in operation at that time.
- Rights of Way would be taken into account when measuring distances to assess eligibility for free travel. We would measure the shortest route along which a young person may walk safely.





Likely impact of the proposed changes

If changes are made to school and post-16 travel policies, the following children, young people, families and residents are likely to be affected. These figures are based on modelling using a snapshot from Autumn 2016 which did not include Rights of Way.

Some residents would be likely to see a **positive benefit** depending on their circumstances:

a) We estimate 75,000 (10%) of all Suffolk residents use public transport and they may benefit from increased public transport options.

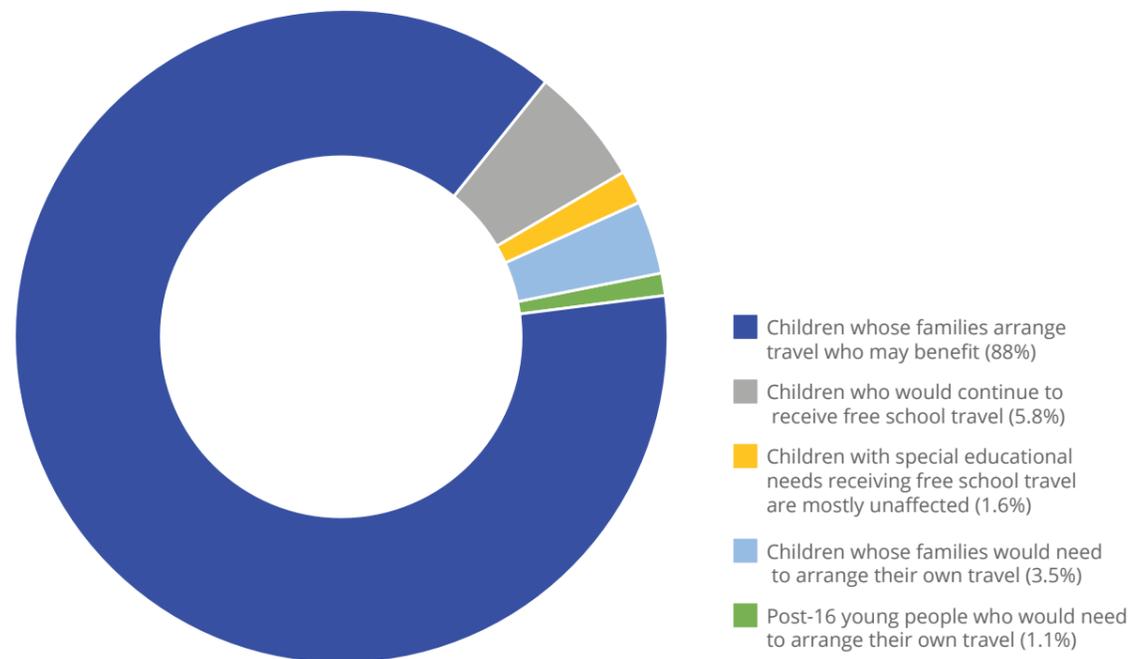
The following children and young people would be **unaffected** by the changes, or **may benefit** because there may be more options for their home to school or college travel:

a) 88.0% (93,000) of children and young people whose families currently arrange their own travel to school or college. These children and young people could benefit from increased public transport options.

b) 5.8% (6,100) of children and young people would continue to receive free school travel provided by us and would be unaffected as they attend their nearest suitable school and live more than the statutory walking distance from the school or have no safe route to school.

c) 1.6% (1,700) of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities access a free school travel service provided by us and would be mostly unaffected. Approximately 30 children would need to have their transport entitlement reassessed by the Individual Needs Travel Group panel.

The following chart shows the potential impact on families.



The following are likely to be affected:

- **Option 1, For children aged 5 to 16** in 2019, about 3000 pupils would lose their current entitlement - 1950 would be entitled to free travel to their nearest school; 1050 would have no entitlement as their nearest school is under two or three miles.

An Estimated 700 pupils starting their schooling in Reception or moving on to the next phase of education would not be entitled to free travel to their current Transport Priority Area school. Of these, 450 would be entitled to free travel to their nearest school and 250 would have no entitlement as their nearest school is under distance.

- **Option 2, For children aged 5 to 16** in 2019, about 3000 pupils continuing at their current schools would keep their transport entitlement.

An estimated 700 pupils starting their schooling in Reception or moving on to the next phase of education would not be entitled to free travel to their current Transport Priority Area school. Of these, 450 would be entitled to free travel to their nearest school and 250 would have no entitlement as their nearest school is under distance.

The estimated numbers of pupils keeping their current entitlement and the numbers assessed under the new policy would change over the seven year transitional period.

School year commencing	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Retain entitlement	3700	3000	2300	1500	800	200	100	0
Children assessed under proposed policy								
Nearest school over 2 or 3 miles		450	900	1400	1800	2250	2300	2400
Nearest school under 2 or 3 miles		250	500	800	1100	1250	1300	1300

Rights of Way - A high level assessment using Rights of Way to measure walking distances indicates the number of children aged 5-16 likely to be affected would be up to 300 greater than detailed in the opposite page.



Reducing the impact of potential changes for children of compulsory school age (age 5 to 16) and post-16

The Local Solutions menu can be used to mitigate impact with options 1, 2 and 3.

With a group of schools, we have developed a range of potential 'local solutions'. The local solutions could be introduced alongside any changes to the school and post-16 travel policy. They could reduce the cost of school transport and help manage some of the impact of any policies changes.

Individual schools/colleges, communities or parish councils would have to agree the detail with Suffolk County Council prior to their implementation. Part of the agreement would include an assessment of the impact on the health and wellbeing of the children affected.

As part of the consultation we would like to know what you think about the local solutions ideas.

You may also wish to discuss these with your school, college or local community to explore further.

LOCAL SOLUTION A



CHANGING SCHOOL START AND FINISH TIMES

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
If school A and school B both start their day at 8.45am then the same bus cannot be used for both schools.
If school A started 15 minutes earlier then one bus maybe able to serve both schools.

LOCAL SOLUTION B



EXTEND SCHOOL OPENING TIMES

Why?
Potential to re-use vehicles on school transport.

An example
School A currently starts lessons at 9am and allows pupils to be dropped off at 8.30am.
If pupils could be dropped off at 8.00am the bus could do a second run dropping off a second group of students at 8.45am.



LOCAL SOLUTION C



INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE VEHICLES USED

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
Students from four taxis could be placed on one minibus.
Students from three minibuses could be placed on one bus.

LOCAL SOLUTION D



INCREASE ACCEPTABLE JOURNEY TIMES

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
Department for Education currently recommends:
• Primary- maximum journey length 45 minutes
• Secondary- maximum journey length 75 minutes
If journeys were longer, there may be potential to combine routes.

LOCAL SOLUTION E

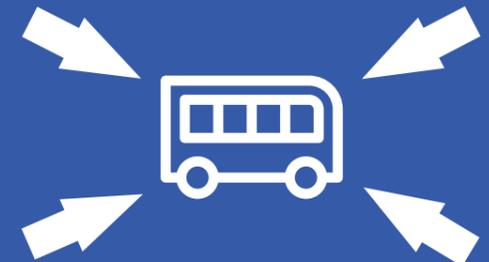


INFLUENCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD) DAYS

Why?
We may be able to operate buses on fewer days.

An example
Bus route serves school A and school B.
If only school A is closed for PD day bus route still has to run to school B.
If school A and school B had the same PD days the bus wouldn't need to run.

LOCAL SOLUTION F



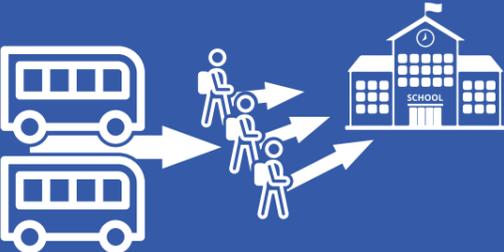
HUB COLLECTION POINTS

Why?
We may be able to operate shorter routes and reduce cost of transport.

An example
Instead of buses getting close to every house on rural roads, students would go to collection points in or near a village centre.



LOCAL SOLUTION G



RIDE AND STRIDE

Why?
We may be able to operate shorter routes and reduce cost of transport.

An example
If school A and school B both start their day at 8.45am then the same bus cannot be used for both schools.
If school A started 15 minutes earlier then one bus maybe able to serve both schools.

LOCAL SOLUTION H



OPT-IN TO TRAVEL

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
We currently allocate seats for all students that are entitled to free travel. Some of these students do not use the bus, this means there are buses with empty seats which have been paid for.
If students had to apply for free travel, we would then only allocate seats for what is needed. This means there could be fewer buses.

LOCAL SOLUTION I



CHANGING SCHOOL START AND FINISH TIMES

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
If school A and school B both start their day at 8.45am then the same bus cannot be used for both schools.
If school A started 15 minutes earlier then one bus maybe able to serve both schools.

LOCAL SOLUTION J



PLAN FOR EXCESS CAPACITY

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

An example
We currently allocate seats for all students that are entitled to free travel. We know that some of these students don't use the bus, but we don't know exactly who. This means that there may be buses with empty seats.
If we assume that around 20% of students do not make use of passes, we can plan for fewer buses.

LOCAL SOLUTION K

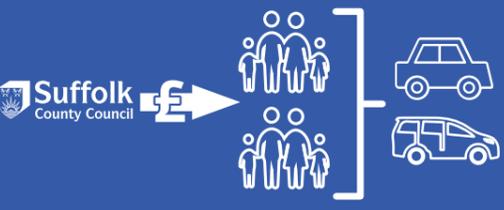


SCHOOLS PLAN TRANSPORT

Why?
Flexibility for schools to work collaboratively or to use transport provision for students without entitlement.

An example
We would provide funding to school A based on the number of entitled students. School A would use funding to arrange transport that may also include provision for non-entitled students.
School A pays for transport and manages charges for non-entitled students.

LOCAL SOLUTION L



PARENTAL PAYMENTS

Why?
Potential to use fewer vehicles on school transport.

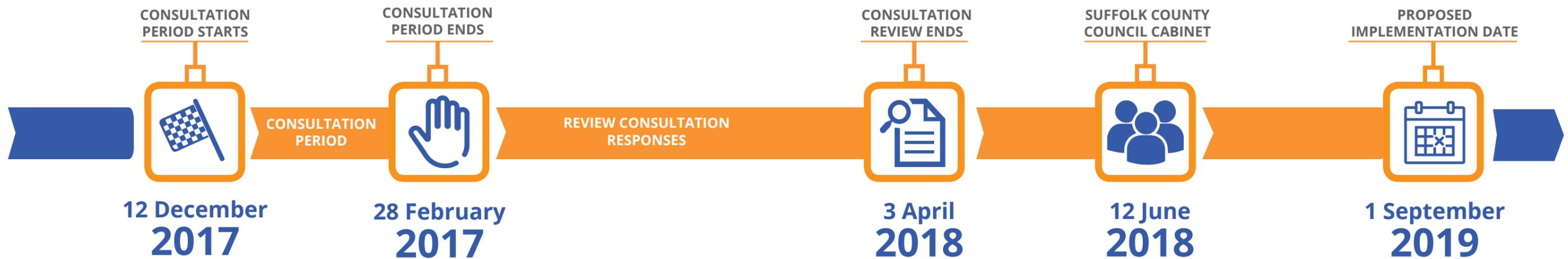
An example
In areas where there are entitled students but a bus is not cost-effective, payments would be made to parents who as a group arrange informal car sharing or other sustainable transport.



Next steps

Key Dates

Consultation period starts – 12 December 2017
 Consultation period ends – 28 February 2018
 Review consultation responses – 1 March 2018 to 3 April 2018
 Suffolk County Council Cabinet – 12 June 2018
 Proposed implementation date – 1 September 2019



Further information

There is a range of supporting information available at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel, including:

- Frequently asked questions
- Tables describing the potential impact for the different areas of Suffolk and schools
- Maps to show the nearest school for residential all addresses
- Nearest school checker³
- Findings from the pre-consultation
- An initial Equality Impact Assessment

You can also email: schooltravel@suffolk.gov.uk

³In January 2018, a second nearest school checker will be available which will include Rights of Way



How to get involved

Most people find it easiest to complete the online survey, available on our website at: www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel.

You can complete a hard copy survey, this is available to download at www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel or by calling 0345 603 1842 (Mon-Fri 08:30 – 18:00).

Please return hard copy surveys to:

Suffolk County Council – school and post-16 travel consultation
 Endeavour House
 8 Russell Road
 Ipswich
 Suffolk IP1 2BX

You can attend a consultation workshop to consider themes from the consultation, the proposals and general questions and answers.

To book your place and for full details, visit www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel or call 0345 603 1842 (Mon-Fri 08:30 – 18:00). Note that events may book up quickly.

The workshops are taking place in the following locations.

Venue	Room	Date	Time
Kesgrave Conference Centre Twelve Acre Approach, Ipswich IP5 1JF	Orwell Room	16 January 2018	19:00 - 20:30
Eye Community Centre Magdalen Street, Eye, IP23 2DH	Main Hall	17 January 2018	19:00 - 20:30
River Stour Trust - the Visitor Education Centre Dove House, Great Cornard, CO10 0GF	VEC	18 January 2018	19:00 - 20:30
Beccles Public Hall Smallgate, Beccles NR34 9AD	Main Hall	22 January 2018	19:00 - 20:30
Lakenheath Pavilion Eriswell Road, Lakenheath IP27 9AF	Main Hall	23 January 2018	19:00 - 20:30
West Suffolk House Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 3YU	WSH - GFR12 - Meeting Room	26 January 2018	5 sessions between 14:00 - 19:30



We are also holding a Have Your Say events. This is an opportunity for you or a group to present alternative options to a panel. To book your 10 minute slot and for full details, visit: www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel or call 0345 603 1842 (Mon-Fri 08:30 – 18:00).

Venue and Address	Date	Time
West Suffolk House , Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3SP	30 January 2018	19:00 - 22:00

If you need help to understand this information, please call: 0345 603 1842 (Mon-Fri 08:30 – 18:00). An interpreting service is also available for those who need it.

Please ensure that your responses arrive with us by 23:59 on 28 February 2018.

All responses will be analysed and summarised in a report that Suffolk County Council's Cabinet will consider on 12 June 2018.



Glossary

Admissions

There are two types of school admission applications. The normal admissions round is a set period of time when applications and decisions are made for children to start school full-time, or to move on to their next school in the following school year. A parent in Suffolk is able to apply for up to three preferred schools and applications are prioritised using the admissions oversubscription criteria chosen by the school's admissions authority. Some schools, but not all, chose to use Catchment Areas as one of their criteria. We coordinate the normal admissions round to ensure that every learner receives the single offer of a school place at the highest ranked school possible to meet parental preference.

All other applications are considered as in-year admissions to a school. This is applications made during the school year or for entry at the start of a school year but in a different year group from the school's normal year(s) of entry.

- Last year in the normal admissions round: 97.5% of children in Suffolk were offered a place at one of the high or upper schools their parents or carers applied for, with 93.5% getting their first preference when their application was on time.
- For primary (including infant, junior and middle) schools, last year in the normal admissions round 98.5% of children in Suffolk were offered a place at one of the primary or infant schools their parents or carers applied for, with 94% getting their first preference when they applied on time.

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

We do not provide transport for apprenticeships on the basis that they are earning a wage.

The post-16 travel policy is discretionary, and the level of subsidy provided by us is for those in full-time education.

We provide the Endeavour Card for all those young people in full-time education, learning and training, which includes those participating on traineeships, supported internships and apprenticeships.

Catchment Area

Each year every school must publish an admissions policy that states the oversubscription criteria, that is the rules used to prioritise application, to decide which children will be offered places at the school when more children apply than the number of available school places.

The admissions authority, who is responsible for a school's admissions policy decides its oversubscription criteria and this may, include using a Catchment Area. If used, a Catchment Area will give a higher priority for admission to the school for children who live within the Catchment Area boundary, over those who live outside.

The county council, the admissions authority responsible for community and voluntary controlled (usually Church of England) schools, has previously decided to use Catchment Areas as one of the oversubscription criteria for these schools. However, some admissions authorities in Suffolk, such as free schools and many academy trusts, do not use Catchment Areas at all. Instead they have chosen to prioritise the order in which children are offered school places in other ways as stated in their published admissions policies.

Catchment Areas only apply in respect of school admission priorities, and do not have any influence in respect of the legal requirements for provision of home to school transport.

Closed contract

A closed contract is used when the county council is not able to buy seats on a public registered bus service or another commercially viable transport service in the area so a contract is procured for a school bus to take eligible students from home to school.

Members of the public are unable to travel on a closed contract bus route.

Commercially viable

This occurs when a commercial operator assesses that the revenue generated from passengers wishing to travel will exceed the total actual cost of running that bus service, including an element of profit.

Cost recovery

As part of the financial assessment to ensure a commercially viable bus route, cost recovery is the calculation of the ticket fare that is needed to be charged.

Average cost per year is currently £960, with individual fares at £2 per day to £7 per day (Pre-16) and ranging from £2 per day to £9 per day (Post-16).

Extended rights eligibility

We provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit if:

- the nearest suitable school is beyond two miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11);
- the school is between two and six miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);
- the school is between two and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).

Nearest suitable school

This is the closest school by walking distance to the child's home address with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any special educational needs the child may have. It does not include independent schools except where it is either named in the child's Education, Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, or it is the nearer of two or more schools named.

ONS Lower layer super output areas

Lower layer super output areas are made up of groups of output areas (see below). The population of a lower layer super output area is between 1000 and 3000. These were created by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

ONS Output areas

Output areas are geographical areas with an average population of around 300. They were created by the Office of National Statistics from clusters of adjacent postcodes so data could be presented for small areas without breaching confidentiality.

Rights of Way

The measurement of the statutory eligibility distance is not defined as the shortest distance by road. Instead, it is measured by the shortest available route which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk safely. As such, the route measured may include footpaths, bridleways, and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

School Travel Plans

A school's School Travel Plan should promote active, safe and sustainable travel to their school. A school travel plan should include elements such as:

- encouraging more walking and cycling;
- improving safety on the school journey;
- raising awareness among pupils and parents of the harmful effects of increasing car use on children's health, safety, and independence.

Spare seats

A discretionary scheme in place which may provide assistance to children who would not otherwise qualify for free travel by using spare seats on closed contract journeys that we have arranged for children entitled to free travel. This does not currently extend to the offer of seats on public transport journeys or to other vehicles that have not been hired as a whole to carry out school transport journeys solely for the county council. The availability of a seat is reviewed termly.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A child or young person has special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. They have such a learning difficulty or disability if they, (a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions.

Sustainable Modes of Travel

Travel arrangements that may improve the physical well-being of the individuals who use them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority's area, or a combination of the two.

Three-tier education system

In the Bury St Edmunds area there are some schools where children can go to a:

- Primary school from the Reception year to Year 4 before moving to;
- A middle school from Year 5, then to;
- An upper school from Year 9.



For more information:

www.suffolk.gov.uk/schooltravel

If you need help to understand this information in another language please call 03456 066 067.

Se precisar de ajuda para ler estas informações em outra língua, por favor telefone para o número abaixo. 03456 066 067

Portuguese

Jeigu jums reikia šios informacijos kita kalba, paskambinkite 03456 066 067

Lithuanian

Jeżeli potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji w swoim języku zadzwoń na podany poniżej numer. 03456 066 067

Polish

Dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru a înțelege această informație într-o altă limbă, vă rugăm să telefonați la numărul 03456 066 067

Romanian

এই লেখাটি যদি অন্য ভাষাতে বুঝতে চান তাহলে নিচের নম্বরে ফোন করুন 03456 066 067

Bengali

Если для того чтобы понять эту информацию Вам нужна помощь на другом языке, позвоните, пожалуйста, по телефону 03456 066 067

Russian

If you would like this information in another format, including audio or large print, please call **03456 066 067**.



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