

Hampshire County Council
Future Services
Consultation

Spring 2025

Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation – Spring 2025

About this consultation

Following approval of Hampshire County Council’s budget for 2025/26, residents and stakeholders are invited to share their views on a range of proposed service changes that could help to contribute towards addressing a remaining predicted shortfall of £97.6 million in the County Council’s budget for 2025/26.

Consultation period: from 12 March to 11.59pm on 7 May 2025

Translation

If you need this information in another language or format, please email insight@hants.gov.uk

如果您希望以其他语言或格式接收本信息，请发送电子邮件至 insight@hants.gov.uk

Jeżeli potrzebują Państwo dostępu do tych informacji w innym języku lub formacie, prosimy o kontakt na adres email insight@hants.gov.uk

Se precisar dessas informações em outro idioma ou formato, envie um e-mail para insight@hants.gov.uk

Si necesita esta información en otro idioma o formato, envíe un correo electrónico a insight@hants.gov.uk

Daca doriti informatii intr-o alta limba sau intr-un alt format, va rugam sa trimiteti un mesaj la adresa de e-mail: insight@hants.gov.uk

यदि तिपाईंलाई यो जानकारी अर्को भाषामा चाहिन्छ भने कृपया insight@hants.gov.uk मा ईमेल गर्नुहोस्।

താങ്ക്ൾക്ക് ഈ വിവരങ്ങൾ മറ്റ് ഭാഷയിൽ ലഭിക്കണമെങ്കിൽ, ദയവായി insight@hants.gov.uk എന്ന് ഇമെയിലിലേക്ക് എഴുതുക.

Contents

Context for consultation	4
About the proposals	5
How your views will be used	7
How to have your say	8
Proposal: Older Adults' Day Services	9
Proposal: Planned Highway Maintenance	14
Proposal: Post-16 Transport Services	18
Proposed changes to the School Transport and Post-16 Transport Services	25
Proposal One: To reduce the number of unused seats by utilising bus pass usage data	28
Proposal Two: To increase flexibility to meet short-term variations in demand by using the full licensed capacity of buses	31
Proposal Three: To make discretionary transport more viable by asking parents to increase their financial contribution to the cost of the transport	34
Proposal Four: To promote the most independent forms of transport assistance by prioritising a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective	36
Appendices	40
Appendix A	41
Appendix B	47

Context for consultation

Hampshire County Council (the County Council) delivers most of Hampshire's public services, to 1.4 million residents, and we are responsible for around 80% of all spending on council services in the county^[1].

In recent years, the County Council has experienced increasing costs and demand for services like social care, school transport, and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. More recently, Government decisions, such as increased National Insurance costs, have also added to our budget pressures, which have reached a record high. All of this means that we have less money to spend on other services, despite:

- Making significant savings in recent years by streamlining our organisational structure, including a reduction in Director and Assistant Director posts. This has made us one of the leanest county council Senior Officer groups in the country.
- Changing the way we work by streamlining back-office functions, embracing digital opportunities, only spending on essential items and becoming more efficient, innovative and commercial in our approach to delivering services.
- Reducing the level of service we provide in some areas (most recently Cabinet agreed a number of service changes in November 2024 following the public [Future Services Consultation](#)^[2]).
- Looking for ways to raise income, such as disposing of land and buildings we no longer need.
- Raising Council Tax in line with central Government policy.
- Using our financial reserves to help address budget shortfalls (these are now insufficient to keep plugging gaps in future).
- Asking central Government for financial help, for the ability to raise Council Tax by a maximum of 15%, as well as for changes to the law and funding for local government. (Central Government have recently rejected our request to raise Council Tax by a maximum of 15%.)

Even with all the changes highlighted above, our forecasts predict that by 2025/26 the County Council would still have a recurring budget gap of £182 million. After implementing Phase One of our [savings programme](#)^[3] and following announcements in the local government finance settlement, this has been reduced to a £97.6 million budget shortfall for 2025/26.

[1] Further information on our budget and the services we deliver can be found in the Budget Book at: hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/budgetspendingandperformance/accounts

[2] hants.gov.uk/News/20241410FutureServicesfinaldecisions

[3] democracy.hants.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=63758

In this context, we have now had to consider how a focus on only providing all services at the legal minimum level could help us. We have worked with an independent panel of subject matter experts to do this. Their view is that we are a well performing authority who cannot find enough savings to balance our budget going forwards. However, they strongly urge that we remain in control for as long as possible.

We have also been accepted onto the Government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) and invited to put forward proposals for Local Government Reorganisation across Hampshire by September 2025. However, whilst these programmes have enormous long-term significance, they do not solve our immediate budget challenges. Furthermore, the cost of changes to local government structures must be funded locally so any savings from a streamlined local government system are not likely to arrive until the next decade.

So, for now we need to continue our ongoing focus to identify enough savings to balance our budget. As part of this, we are now proposing some further service changes that we believe could have a significant public impact. We are seeking to understand these impacts in more detail, to consult on potential options and to see if there are other ways in which the savings could be made.

Please note:

We recognise this period of financial challenge is difficult for residents who are most in need, who may be concerned about the assistance they receive. Our financial situation does not, and will never, impede the services to those of our residents and neighbours most needing of our support. The County Council will continue to meet its core purpose; caring for those residents that need us the most, including working with those with disabilities to help them lead fulfilling lives, protecting children at risk of harm and supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities, although we may deliver these services in a different way.

About the proposals

In February 2025 Hampshire County Council met to **consider further spending proposals and budget measures to protect core services**^[4]. These require further savings of at least £97.6 million during 2025/26 to help meet the expected budget shortfall.

The service change proposals outlined within this consultation would contribute around £9.9 million in total towards closing our budget gap, while ensuring that we continue to meet the statutory duties which we are required by law to carry out.

We are presenting these proposals together to help you understand the range of services affected and consider the combined potential effect on individuals, communities and organisations, should you wish to do so.

[4] democracy.hants.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=73284#mgDocuments

As in the last [Future Services Consultation](#)^[5] (held from January – March 2024) feedback about each service change proposal will be fully considered when final decisions on the proposals are made.

This current consultation comprises proposals relating to:

- **Older Adults' Day Services:** For the County Council's HCC Care and Support Service to stop running the older adult day care services at Chesil Lodge (Winchester), and Newman Court (Basingstoke). These day care services provide a range of individual and group activities (e.g. crafts, exercise, singing) together with personal care. People currently attending day care services and their carers would continue to have their eligible needs met either through these services transferring to an independent provider or through alternative care provision.
- **Planned highways maintenance:** To remove the £4.323 million funding provided each year by the County Council to supplement Department for Transport (DfT) funding for planned highway maintenance activities, incorporating larger-scale structural repairs, surface treatments on roads, and drainage improvements.
- **Post-16 Transport only:**
 - To focus the County Council's resources on those most in need, by amending the eligibility criteria for Post-16 transport assistance so that the County Council would only assist with travel for Post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability, and who are from a low-income family.
 - To make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring all families of students who receive County Council-provided Post-16 transport assistance to contribute to the costs of transport for their child.
 - To support SEND students to develop their independent travel skills by introducing mandatory Independent Travel Training (ITT) for some Post-16 students.
 - To make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring parents/carers/responsible adults to act as a Passenger Assistant where it is reasonable for them to do so.
- **Both School Transport and Post-16 Transport:**
 - To reduce the number of unused seats by utilising bus pass usage data.
 - To increase flexibility to meet short-term variations in demand by using the full licensed capacity of buses.
 - To make discretionary transport more viable by asking parents to increase their financial contribution towards the cost of the transport.
 - To promote the most independent forms of transport assistance by prioritising a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective.

[5] hants.gov.uk/News/20241410FutureServicesfinaldecisions

As part of this consultation, we have provided more detailed information on each of these proposals to help you understand how they might impact our service. Please do consider this information carefully before sharing your views.

How your views will be used

The County Council is committed to five principles of consultation:

- To consult on key issues and proposals.
- To consult in good time.
- To be inclusive but with clear and appropriate limits.
- To consult using clear, simple information.
- To ensure that responses are taken into account when decisions are made.

The views submitted through this consultation will be collated and used to understand the potential impact of these service change proposals on local residents, service users and other stakeholders and how they could be adapted in light of these, and any alternative approaches suggested.

Reports will then be presented to the County Council's Cabinet to be considered as part of their decision meetings during summer 2025. These reports will also be made available online via: hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation

How to have your say

This consultation is open from 12 March to 11.59pm on 7 May 2025. Please make sure you respond within this time as responses received after the closing date will not be included in the consultation reports.

There are four services for which we are proposing changes in this consultation. You can share your thoughts on as many or as few as you like. Please read all the information about each change before giving your opinion.

You can give your feedback using the consultation Response Form online at hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation. If you don't want to fill it all out at once, you can save it and come back to it later.

If you prefer, you can email your response directly to Hampshire County Council using the email address: insight@hants.gov.uk or write to **Freepost HAMPSHIRE**. (Please also write PandO, IEU, FM09 on the back of the envelope).

Copies of the Information Packs and the consultation Response Form, along with Easy Read^[6] versions of these documents, are available to view, enlarge, download and print on the consultation webpage: hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation. You can also listen to the documents here using a screen reader or a 'Read Aloud' function. If you do not have access to the internet, it is available through your local library.

If you need a copy of the Information Pack or the Response Form in another language or format or if you have any queries about the consultation, please contact: insight@hants.gov.uk.

If you are able to, please complete the consultation Response Form online as this will save money, both in postage and in staff time in manually entering your response into the consultation.

You can view the Privacy Notice for this consultation, which explains how we will use your information, how this will be stored, and for how long we will keep it, either in the Response Form or on the consultation webpage.

[6] Easy Read is an accessible format that provides information using easy words in short sentences, with pictures to help explain the words.



Proposal: Older Adults' Day Services

Proposal: Older Adults' Day Services

For the County Council's HCC Care and Support Service to stop running the older adult day care services at Chesil Lodge (Winchester), and Newman Court (Basingstoke). These day care services provide a range of individual and group activities (e.g. crafts, exercise, singing) together with personal care. People currently attending day care services and their carers would continue to have their eligible needs met either through these services transferring to an independent provider or through alternative care provision.

What is the current situation?

Most care provision for older people in Hampshire is provided by the independent, voluntary and private sectors. However, Hampshire County Council has retained a high level of in-house service provision compared with other local authorities. Our in-house service arm is called HCC Care and Support; it provides nursing, residential and day opportunities for eligible older and younger adults across Hampshire.

About HCC Care and Support day care services for older adults

Older adult day care services support the physical and emotional well-being of older individuals (aged 65 or over) with social care needs. Day care services are building-based services offering social interaction, engaging group and individual activities (e.g. crafts, exercise, singing), and personal care, while also providing respite for family carers who may care for the individual at home.

HCC Care and Support currently run two older adult day care services. The day services are located within the residential Extra Care complexes at Chesil Lodge (Winchester), and Newman Court (Basingstoke). The services operate 5 days per week (Monday to Friday). Around 70 older adults use these services at least once per week.

Day care services allow the County Council to meet its responsibilities under the Care Act, although there are other ways of meeting these legal duties.

The number of older adults using day care funded by the County Council has reduced by more than half over the past 7 years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2017 there were approximately 600 people accessing these services; today the number is around 250.

Other day care services provided by HCC Care and Support

HCC Care and Support also provides:

- Four day care services for adults with a mixture of profiles (such as older or younger adults, and adults with disabilities).

- Ten day opportunity services, which provide activities and training for adults with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

These other day services would **not** be affected by the proposed changes.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing that HCC Care and Support would no longer run the older adult day care services at Chesil Lodge (Winchester), and Newman Court (Basingstoke). Instead, we would look for other ways to continue to provide services that meet the eligible needs of those people using Chesil Lodge and Newman Court day services, as detailed in the 'How the proposal would be implemented' section below.

Please note: These proposals only relate to the provision of **day care services** at Chesil Lodge and Newman Court. We are not proposing changes to any of the other services delivered from these locations.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

Although providing day care services allows the County Council to meet its responsibilities under the Care Act, we do not need to provide these services in the way we currently do.

No longer running older adult day care services in-house (through HCC Care and Support) would eventually contribute around £250,000 per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

Given the decline in service user numbers and the costs of running the older adult day care services, we believe that the proposed approach is a more efficient way to support older adults.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, from April 2026 HCC Care and Support would no longer run the older adult day care services at Chesil Lodge (Winchester), and Newman Court (Basingstoke).

We would look for a suitable provider (or providers) who could run these services from April 2026. This could be from the existing day care centres or somewhere else nearby.

If no suitable provider can be found then these two day services would close, and we would put alternative arrangements in place to meet service users' and carers' eligible needs. Alternative provision might include:

- Other day care services which could meet the individual's needs.
- Personal care and support in the person's own home (domiciliary care).
- Attending a local residential care home for sessions each week.
- Meals on Wheels.
- Respite and carer support services, such as providing a '[take a break](#)^[7]' service for an unpaid carer.
- Use of Direct Payments, to enable individuals to arrange alternative day services or other activities of their choice for themselves.
- Placement into residential care settings.

During the consultation, social care practitioners would work sensitively with the users of the service, and their families where appropriate, to find alternative services that meet their eligible care and support needs. This would take into account their individual circumstances and needs as well as the needs of their family carers, the need to maintain friendship groups, as well as where they live and what is available locally to them.

We would try to get these changes to start from April 2026, to reduce disruption for the older adults and carers affected.

What are the potential impacts?

If a decision is taken for HCC Care and Support to stop running older adult day care services as described in this proposal, service users may no longer be able to access day care at Chesil Lodge (Winchester) and Newman Court (Basingstoke), or there may be changes to the services available at these locations.

In the event of any service changes, we would work with affected service users, and family carers, to ensure that their needs continue to be met under the Care Act.

We recognise that carers may be impacted by changes to day care services. We would ensure that the needs of carers would be considered as part of any changes to services.

Staff working at these older adult day care services may be at risk of redundancy if there

[7] hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/adultsocialcare/respites-break

are changes to services. If alternative provider(s) for the services were identified it is possible that staff would transfer to the new provider. This may include their existing employment conditions being protected under Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment), often known as TUPE. However, this would be subject to any agreement with the new provider(s).

What are the alternatives?

There are other approaches that we could take that are not proposed at this time. In developing this proposal, we have also considered the following:

- **Continuing to operate the two services in their current buildings with their current operating model and staffing**

As service user numbers have reduced, the service has become less financially viable than other options, and therefore this would not be the most efficient use of resources.

- **Trying to make the current service more efficient**

This may involve different operating times, staffing levels or operating the services from different Hampshire County Council premises.

There have been previous reviews and efficiencies in this area, so further opportunities are limited and unlikely to deliver significant savings by April 2026 in comparison to the recommended options put forward.



Proposal: Planned Highway Maintenance

Proposal: Planned Highway Maintenance

Removing the £4.323 million funding provided each year by the County Council to supplement Department for Transport (DfT) funding for planned highway maintenance.

What is the current situation?

Hampshire County Council, as the highway authority for Hampshire, is responsible for fulfilling the legal duties outlined in the Highways Act 1980. This includes taking reasonable steps to maintain a 5,500-mile network of publicly accessible roads, footways, and cycleways used by residents and visitors.

Responsibilities within the scope of this proposal

We have a planned highway maintenance programme to address large-scale structural repairs, surface treatments, and drainage improvements. This programme is funded by special ring-fenced grants from the Department for Transport (DfT), which means we can only use the money for specific purposes.

Since 2010, the County Council has added £10 million each year from its own funds to increase the amount of planned maintenance work that is carried out. However, following the Cabinet decision in October 2024, this extra funding will be reduced to £2.5 million from April 2025 and we are now proposing that it is removed entirely from the 2025/26 budget. More information on this can be found here: democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s126621/Decision%20Record.pdf

We are also proposing to remove an additional £1.823 million that, although allocated for general capital works, we use for additional planned highway maintenance.

Together, these changes would reduce our annual contribution to planned highway maintenance by £4.323 million.

Further information about planned highway maintenance can be found here: hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/plannedmaintenance

Responsibilities that are not affected by this proposal

The County Council budgets an amount each year (£31.750 million for 2025/26) that is used for a range of reactive highway maintenance activities, such as pothole repairs, replacing road markings, cleaning drains, environmental maintenance and emergency road repairs. This funding will not be affected by the proposed changes.

The County Council does not maintain motorways and some major A-roads (historically known as trunk roads), which are managed by National Highways, nor does it maintain

‘unadopted’ private roads, which are the responsibility of property owners. As such, these parts of the road network are not affected by the proposals in this consultation.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing to remove the £4.323 million funding provided each year by the County Council to supplement DfT funding for planned highway maintenance. It is proposed to remove this from 2025/26.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

Removing the amount of money we spend to supplement DfT funding for planned highway maintenance would contribute towards addressing the County Council’s overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

If approved, the removal of County Council funding for planned highway maintenance would be offset by the confirmed, increased highways maintenance funding allocation for 2025/26 from the DfT.

This proposal would save £4.323 million per year from our budget, while allowing us to continue to meet our legal duty to maintain the local road network in Hampshire.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, £4.323 million would be withdrawn from the annual planned highway maintenance budget from 2025/26.

What are the potential impacts?

For 2025/26, the DfT have provided the County Council with £15.2 million additional grant capital funding for highway maintenance. This means that, after accounting for the removal of £4.323 million in this proposal, combined with the £7.5m reduction previously approved in October 2024 as a Phase One saving, there would still be an overall increase of £3.4 million to the highway maintenance budget. This could mean that planned maintenance activities can continue at a similar level for 2025/26.

The impact on the planned highway maintenance programme in subsequent years cannot be confirmed until longer-term funding arrangements are announced by central Government.

If funding provided by central Government does not continue at anticipated levels, then the service that could be provided (including larger scale structural repairs, road surface treatment programmes and drainage improvements) may reduce. However, if funding is sustained at current levels or increased, then services could improve.

The County Council is also actively seeking disruption charging (lane rental) powers from the Department for Transport. Subject to the necessary powers being successfully secured and new national legislation that is expected later this year, a proportion of the income raised - expected to be around 50% - could be re-invested back into highway maintenance. This could reduce some of the impact of withdrawing the supplementary planned maintenance budget, should central Government funding levels change after 2025/26. Further information on this can be found here: hants.gov.uk/News/20252801DisruptionChargingNextSteps

It is worth highlighting that the proposal to reduce planned maintenance funding would not reduce the County Council's capacity to react to emergency or safety-related defects such as pothole repairs.

What are the alternatives?


There are other approaches that we could take that are not proposed at this time. In developing this proposal, we have also considered the following:

- **Maintaining current levels of discretionary funding provided by the County Council**

This option is not being proposed because of the scale of the budget pressures faced by the County Council, and the legal requirement to operate within budget.

- **Reducing the environmental and/or routine/reactive maintenance budgets**

This option is not proposed because these budgets enable the County Council to meet its legal duty to maintain the highway.



Proposal: Post-16 Transport Services

Proposal: Post-16 Transport Services

We are considering making the following changes to the Post-16 Transport service:

- To focus the County Council's resources on those most in need, by amending the eligibility criteria for Post-16 transport assistance so that the County Council would only assist with travel for Post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability, and who are from a low-income family.
- To make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring all families of students who receive County Council-provided Post-16 transport assistance to contribute to the costs of transport for their child.
- To support SEND students to develop their independent travel skills by introducing mandatory Independent Travel Training (ITT) for some Post-16 students.
- To make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring parents/carers/responsible adults to act as a Passenger Assistant where it is reasonable for them to do so.

What is the current situation?

There is no automatic entitlement to free school or college transport once a student is over 16. The County Council currently assists with travel expenses for Post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability (SEND). This service currently costs over £5.4 million a year, at an average cost per student of over £12,000. Therefore, a parental contribution towards the cost of this transport is required, and the contribution is uplifted annually by the March Consumer Price Index (CPI). This contribution is currently not required for students from low-income families*.

Currently, transport applications are normally only considered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or if the student has a disability which means they require transport arrangements to be provided. The student or parent needs to apply for transport and provide evidence that without County Council transport assistance, the student would be unable to attend the educational placement.

When assessing an application for Post-16 transport assistance, the County Council considers the criteria as detailed in the [latest Post-16 Transport Policy](#)^[8]. A new application is needed for Post-16 transport assistance every year as the policy statement is reviewed annually.

In some circumstances, where it is necessary for the student's safety or wellbeing, the County Council arranges for Passenger Assistants (PAs) to accompany students on transport.

[8] documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/Post-16-TransportPolicyStatement-2025.pdf

Where PAs are used, these are supplied by either the County Council or transport operators.

* Families are defined as having a low income when the student's parents are in receipt of any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit
- Free school meals (due to low income)

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing to make changes to the current Post-16 Transport service, specifically to:

- Focus the County Council's resources on those most in need, by amending the eligibility criteria for Post-16 transport assistance so that the County Council would only assist with travel for Post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability, and who are from a low-income family.
- Make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring all families of students who receive County Council-provided Post-16 transport assistance to contribute to the costs of transport for their child.

This change would mean that all users/families would need to pay a parental contribution towards the service. Low-income families, who have previously not been required to make the contribution, would be required to make a contribution of approximately 15% of the average cost of Post-16 transport. Many local authorities, including Dorset County Council, Staffordshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council, already require a contribution from low-income families.

The actual contributions would depend on the most up to date average cost of Post-16 transport.

- Support SEND students to develop their independent travel skills by introducing mandatory Independent Travel Training (ITT) for some Post-16 students. Applications for Post-16 students would be considered on the basis that Independent Travel Training could be a mandatory component of the transport offer.
- Make Post-16 Transport provision more sustainable in the long-term by requiring parents/carers/responsible adults to act as a Passenger Assistant where it is reasonable for them to do so. The County Council expects that parents and carers take responsibility for facilitating their child's attendance in education where they are able to do so, which would include acting as a Passenger Assistant unless it can be evidenced that it is not reasonable to expect them to do so.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

It is anticipated that these changes would eventually contribute around £2.55 million per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

The County Council has discretion around how it delivers Post-16 transport services. County Councils are required to consider both the need for students to access their education provision and the resources available when determining the Post-16 transport offer.

- It is expected that amending the criteria used to consider eligibility for Post-16 transport assistance would reduce demand for Post-16 transport services by 25%, whilst still offering assistance to those students with SEND and low income who satisfy the requirements set out in the Post-16 Policy.
- Parental contributions would help to cover a proportion of the actual cost of transport, reducing the amount that is funded by the County Council.

- Independent Travel Training helps to develop independence for students who may be able to travel more independently. For many children and young people, learning to travel independently is an important part of preparing for adulthood and would help them lead fulfilling adult lives. If implemented, this would also potentially see some students move from less to more cost-effective modes of transport.
- Parents acting as a Passenger Assistant would help to reduce the cost of supplying PAs, including pick-ups/drop-offs from different locations.

Hampshire County Council also has a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel. For journeys to schools and colleges this could include increasing the number of shared vehicles leading to fewer vehicles being needed.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, the Post-16 transport application would ask parents to provide evidence (e.g. Universal Credit entitlement letters) that the family is on a low income. If they are not on a low income, Post-16 transport would be declined. For those students who are eligible, a parental contribution would be required.

A student's suitability for Independent Travel Training (ITT) would be assessed on application. Some students will never be able to travel independently, in these cases there would be no requirement for ITT. For other Post-16 students whose independence skills would be enhanced by ITT, this would form a mandatory component of the transport offer.

Where support from a Passenger Assistant is necessary for the student's safety or wellbeing, parents would accompany their child and perform the PA role unless they can provide evidence that it is unreasonable for them to do so. Evidence that would be considered could include, but is not limited to, an employer letter regarding working arrangements or a letter from a medical practitioner.

The changes to the Post-16 Transport service would apply to transport arrangements from September 2026. This would mean that any applications for transport assistance that would commence during the 2026/27 school year (or later) would follow the revised criteria and contributions and would be subject to the new approach to Independent Travel Training and parental passenger assistance. The date that applications open for 2026/27 is still to be confirmed but is likely to be March 2026.

As per Department for Education guidance, the County Council would always retain the ability to award transport outside of policy in exceptional circumstances.

As per current policy, a new application is needed for Post-16 transport assistance every year as the policy statement is reviewed annually. If approved, these changes would apply to new applications covered by the Post-16 Policy for the 2026/27 academic year.

The proposed policy wording can be found in **Appendix A**.

You can also [view the latest Post-16 Transport Policy](#).

What are the potential impacts?

- **Students with SEND and their families**

The proposed changes would impact students living in the county who have special educational needs or a disability and are over the age of 16. Sixth form aged students with SEND could face additional challenges if their transport assistance is reduced.

It is recognised that some families of students with SEND may have a more limited income than other families, as one parent may have needed to reduce working hours or stop working to provide care. This would make it harder for them to afford any potential additional transport costs.

Students with disabilities may require specialised transport, such as wheelchair-accessible vehicles, or those with specific safety features. Reducing transport assistance could reduce access to these services and would require parents of students with SEND to spend time sourcing an alternative option.

Parents who would accompany their child on transport could be placed under additional strain, especially if they have other children or work commitments.

The above issues could make it more difficult for students with SEND to attend Post-16 education regularly and on time, which could impact their education. This could be exacerbated by the fact that students with SEND may need to travel further than other students to attend specialised schools or courses.

- **Students and families with low income**

Families just above the low-income threshold could struggle to afford Post-16 transport costs. Students from these families could face difficulties attending Post-16 education regularly, impacting their education.

- **Rurality**

Students/families in rural areas could be disproportionately affected by these changes. Rural areas are more likely to have limited public transport options, making it difficult for students who are able to use this type of transport to find alternative means of travel. Students in rural areas typically travel longer distances to reach their school or college, increasing the reliance on provided transport services. In addition, the cost of alternative transport options, such as private hire, can be significantly higher in rural areas.

Longer distances also mean that the amount parents have to pay towards school transport is often higher for people in rural areas.

Students from lower income families in rural areas may become more isolated if they are unable to afford transport to Post-16 education.

The County Council has identified the following potential mitigations:

- Provide clear information about alternative transport options including assistance offered by schools and colleges. Partner with local businesses where possible to offer discounted transport services for students.
- Consider offering flexible payment plans to eligible students and their families in some circumstances to help manage the cost of school transport.
- Provide clear guidance/clarification on scenarios where a parent would not be required to act as a Passenger Assistant as part of the policy.
- It is proposed that we would also offer Independent Travel Training so that students are fully prepared to access public transport and develop a key life skill.

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

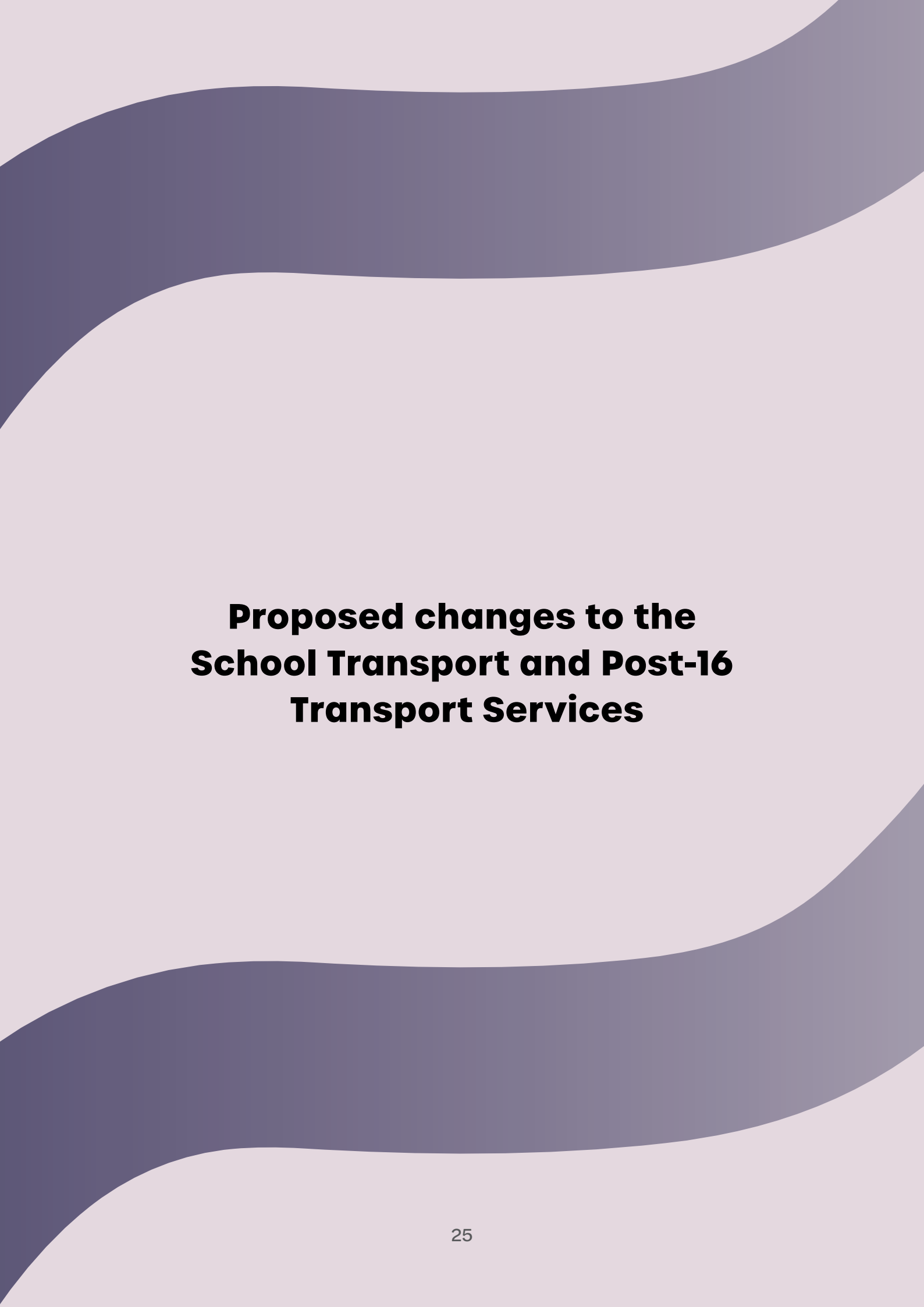
There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

What are the alternatives?

There are other approaches that we could take that are not proposed at this time. In developing this proposal, we have also considered the following:

- **Maintaining current arrangements, eligibility criteria and contributions for Post-16 transport assistance**

This option is not being proposed because of the scale of the budget pressures faced by the County Council, and the legal requirement to operate within budget.



**Proposed changes to the
School Transport and Post-16
Transport Services**

We are considering making the following four changes that would apply to both the School Transport service and the Post-16 Transport service:

- **Proposal One:** To reduce the number of unused seats by utilising bus pass usage data.
- **Proposal Two:** To increase flexibility to meet short-term variations in demand by using the full licensed capacity of buses.
- **Proposal Three:** To make discretionary transport more viable by asking parents to increase their financial contribution to the cost of the transport.
- **Proposal Four:** To promote the most independent forms of transport assistance by prioritising a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective.

NB: These changes are additional to those only proposed for the Post-16 Transport service [here](#).

Should the proposals be approved, the County Council would update the School Transport Policy to reflect the changes. The proposed wording can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

About the School Transport service

The County Council currently arranges daily transport to school for almost 13,900 children and young people. Of these, approximately 9,720 attend mainstream school places and around 4,150 attend places that provide for their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or other needs.

Information on the School Transport service, eligibility criteria, and the application process is available at: hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schooltransport.

The County Council is required by law to provide school transport, free of charge, to all children and young people of compulsory school age that meet the nationally set distance criteria, where any of the following apply:

- The child is of compulsory school age but is under eight years old, and they attend the nearest catchment school or one that is nearer to their home, and the shortest available walking route is more than two miles.
- The child or young person is eight years old or over, but not above compulsory school age, and they attend the nearest catchment school or one that is nearer to their home, where the shortest available walking route is more than three miles (this is reduced to more than two miles if the child or young person meets low-income criteria).
- Parents apply for a place at the designated catchment school and a place is not available. In this situation, School Transport assistance would be offered to the next closest school with an available place if the walking distance criteria above are met.
- The walking route to school is classified as an 'unsafe walking route'.
- The child or young person has SEND and meets the distance criteria described above for School Transport. This also applies where, for reasons of their Special Educational Needs, disabilities or mobility problems, such children and young people cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school.

Children and young people are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday (or from their fifth birthday if it falls on 31 August, 31 December or 31 March) until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they reach 16 years of age.

Please see the current [School Transport Policy \(2024\)](#)^[9] for further information.

About the Post-16 Transport service

Please see the current [Post-16 Transport Policy \(2024\)](#)^[10] for further information.

[9] documents.hants.gov.uk/transport-home-to-school/HTST-Policy-2024.pdf

[10] documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/Post-16-TransportPolicyStatement-2025.pdf

Proposal One: To reduce the number of unused seats by utilising bus pass usage data

What is the current situation?

School Transport routes that require larger vehicles or carry a high number of passengers require students to present a County Council-issued bus pass when boarding. The main goals of this process are to ensure eligible students travel on their assigned vehicles, to prevent overloading, and to make sure no student misses school because they cannot access their assigned bus.

Traditionally, County Council-issued bus passes have been paper-based, held by students throughout the academic year, and checked by bus drivers when boarding. There is currently no system for tracking usage.

However, we are in the process of phasing in a digital bus pass solution for larger vehicles which will deliver operational and user benefits such as simpler and faster allocation of bus passes for larger vehicles.

Digital bus passes will allow us to monitor bus seat usage over an academic term on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, enabling us to track use of individual routes, and usage by individual students.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing to use bus pass usage data to reduce the number of regularly unused seats.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

It is anticipated that this change, combined with Proposal Two (standing capacity), would eventually contribute around £770,000 per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

Hampshire County Council also has a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel. For bus journeys, this could include using seats more efficiently leading to fewer journeys, or smaller vehicles, being needed.

The School Transport service recently conducted an audit of bus seat usage at the ten

schools with the highest number of students using County Council-provided transport (3,976 students across 63 routes that use larger buses). The audit revealed that, on average, 22% of students did not travel on the day their route was audited.

The use of data from digital bus passes would enable the County Council to commission routes and vehicles based on the actual number of students who travel on them.

In addition:

- Adjustments could be made during the year if it is found that individual routes were significantly underused because of students not using their bus passes/ allocated transport.
- When retendering routes, transport commissioners could procure vehicles based on accurate usage figures.
- Individual usage data could also enable the County Council to identify where and investigate why passes are not used by individual students. Bus passes that are no longer required could then be deactivated.

How would the proposal be implemented?

The first phase of digital bus passes is scheduled to be rolled out in Spring/Summer 2025. Once in place on a route, vehicle use would be monitored carefully to identify opportunities to either reduce the size of the vehicle, to accommodate any additional students added to the route in-year, or to inform the route planning process from Summer 2025 onwards.

If this proposal is agreed, where a student has not used their pass for a set period of time (as determined by the School Transport service), the School Transport service would work with schools (and parents where necessary) to establish whether this was for a genuine reason (e.g. extended hospital stay or illness). If not, it would be assumed that the seat is no longer required, and parents of students who have not used their bus passes during this period would be informed that their child's bus pass has been deactivated.

Where a student still needs their pass, they would be able to reapply for the bus pass to be activated.

What are the potential impacts?

This proposal would apply to both School Transport and Post-16 Transport users.

Students with particular conditions – including some students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – may be more likely to be absent from school on multiple occasions, and therefore the data for that student's journeys may suggest non-usage of a bus pass over a particular period of time. A bus pass would not be withdrawn or

deactivated without consulting with the school, and the process would only commence when a significant pattern of non-usage is established.

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to the policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

Proposal Two: To increase flexibility to meet short-term variations in demand by using the full licensed capacity of buses.

What is the current situation?

On public transport, the licensed vehicle capacity (the maximum number of passengers it is allowed to carry) usually includes standing room. When buses are contracted by the County Council for School Transport, standing room is not currently included in the calculation of how many passengers the vehicle can carry. However, the County Council asks operators of larger contracted vehicles to confirm both seated and standing capacities to understand the vehicle's size and seating arrangement.

When an additional student becomes eligible, and the route serving their locality is at maximum seating capacity, the County Council currently commissions an additional vehicle to accommodate the additional student.

What is being proposed?

We are proposing to use the full licensed capacity of buses to help meet variable demand for spaces.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

It is anticipated that this change, combined with Proposal One (bus pass usage data) would eventually contribute around £770,000 per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

Hampshire County Council also has a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel. For bus journeys, this could include using seats more efficiently leading to fewer journeys, or smaller vehicles, being needed.

The use of standing capacity would be a more cost-effective and environmentally responsible approach to providing additional temporary capacity on routes in exceptional circumstances, rather than commissioning additional vehicles. The practice of using standing capacity is already in place within other local authorities, including Lincolnshire County Council and also Lancashire County Council, whose policy is similar to this proposal.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, the County Council would update practices to allow licensed standing capacity to be used in exceptional circumstances from September 2025.

The use of data from digital bus passes (as set out in Proposal One) would enable the County Council to commission routes and vehicles based on the actual number of students who travel on them. Where this data indicates that significantly fewer children than are eligible are actually travelling, the service could allocate more children to a vehicle with the expectation that there will be seats available because other eligible children are not using them.

We would only allocate places up to the limit of the licensed standing capacity, and this would serve as an 'overflow' in the exceptional circumstances where children who do not **normally** use their allocated transport require it on a particular day.

The School Transport team could take into account licensed standing capacity when the size requirement (number of children who need to travel) for each large bus is next reviewed.

Illustrative Example

A County Council contracted bus has 72 seats, with standing capacity of eight. 72 eligible students are allocated to the route, however the digital bus pass data shows that no more than 59 students have ever travelled on that route at one time. A new student from the same area then becomes eligible for transport. Should this change be approved, the student could be allocated to the bus route because there would be seats available. Without this change, an additional taxi would need to be commissioned by the County Council which would travel along the same route, despite there being capacity on the 72-seater bus.

What are the potential impacts?

This proposal would apply to both School Transport and Post-16 Transport users.

The accuracy of the data the County Council expects to collect from digital bus pass usage would mean that standing capacity would rarely need to be used. In almost all cases there will be more than sufficient seats for the students who are travelling.

The following impacts have been considered, should standing capacity be used on a vehicle:

- If a student was temporarily unable to stand (e.g. due to injury), parents or schools could inform the County Council who would alert the relevant route operators.
- Routes transporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) would not be impacted, as it is understood that some students and young people with SEND would be unable to stand for some or all of their journey to school and could be anxious that they would not get a seat.
- Students in rural areas may be more likely to travel for longer distances and therefore could be standing for longer in a scenario where standing capacity is used. However, students travelling longer distances/for longer periods would enter the vehicle first and therefore would be most likely to use seating capacity.

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

Proposal Three: To make discretionary transport more viable by asking parents to increase their financial contribution to the cost of the transport.

What is the current situation?

Where a student does not have statutory entitlement to School Transport, they can appeal or ask for discretion to be applied. This can result in a decision to award them transport on a discretionary (non-statutory) basis.

Local authorities are allowed to request a parental contribution for this discretionary transport. The current rate ranges from £808.25 per year (for journeys up to five miles), up to £1,791.62 per year (for journeys over ten miles).

The rate of contribution is currently reviewed annually in September and charges are adjusted in line with the March Consumer Price Index (CPI). If the student's parents are in receipt of certain benefits, or the family is in receipt of free school meals, or there are other exceptional circumstances as determined by the School Transport service, the parents/family are not currently required to pay the contribution.

What is being proposed?

The current approximate **average** contribution is 15% of costs, and we are proposing increasing this to 30%. Therefore, the County Council would still be providing a subsidy on average of around 70% of the costs of travel.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

It is anticipated that this change would eventually contribute around £5,000 per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

An increase in the contribution amount would mean that a higher proportion of the actual cost of the discretionary transport would be paid by families, reducing the proportion that is funded by the County Council.

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, new discretionary transport would be subject to the new proposed contribution rate from that point.

What are the potential impacts?

This proposal would apply to both School Transport and Post-16 Transport users.

Should this change be approved, families who are granted discretionary transport would see an increase in the amount they are asked to pay. We think this would affect around 60 passengers each year, out of circa 14,000 passengers.

Charging a higher rate for discretionary transport arrangements could disproportionately impact families with a lower income who would be less able to afford higher contribution rates.

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

If a compulsory school age student's parents are in receipt of certain benefits, or the family is in receipt of free school meals, parents/family would not be required to pay the contribution.

In other exceptional circumstances, the School Transport service would retain the option to require a reduced contribution or not require a contribution at all.

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

Proposal Four: To promote the most independent forms of transport assistance by prioritising a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective.

What is the current situation?

The School Transport service provides transport assistance to eligible students, as defined in the School Transport Policy 2024 and Department for Education guidance on [Travel to school for children of compulsory school age](#). The assistance provided includes:

Personal Transport Budgets

In certain circumstances, and subject to parental consent, the most suitable arrangement might be for the parent to provide or arrange the transport. In these cases, the County Council may offer parents a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) to enable the parent to make suitable travel arrangements for transport and/or passenger assistant support. The PTB would replace the student's existing travel arrangement.

Public Transport Passes

If appropriate and available, students are offered a public transport season ticket. This is usually for a bus service although it may be for a train service.

Contracted Transport

If public transport is not available, the County Council may allocate the student to an existing contracted route (which may be a coach, minibus or taxi).

In rare cases, a taxi may be contracted to operate the service when:

- there is no suitable public transport available, and;
- there is not an existing contract serving the route, and;
- the parent is unable or unwilling to accept a personal transport budget, or;
- the student's needs require it.

Independent Travel Training

The School Transport Policy states that Independent Travel Training may be offered to eligible students with parents' consent. Readiness to complete Independent Travel Training would be outlined in the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or agreed by the County Council following a discussion with the school and parents. Once an eligible student has successfully completed Independent Travel Training, their travel arrangements would be reviewed.

What is being proposed?

One of the Hampshire SEND Local Partnership Board's key outcomes is for young people to be able to build independence skills. The use of public transport is one of the skills a student will need in adult life. Personal Transport Budgets enable families to arrange their own transport and be reimbursed for any expenses incurred.

Therefore, we are proposing to prioritise granting a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective. This would guide students, and their families, towards transport assistance that promotes independence.

Reason for this proposal

Until a sustainable long-term national funding solution can be found to address the intense financial pressures facing not only Hampshire County Council, but also wider local government, the County Council has no choice but to consider changing or reducing services in some areas and propose options for savings.

It is anticipated that this change would eventually contribute around £2 million per year towards addressing the County Council's overall anticipated remaining £97.6 million budget deficit from April 2025.

Hampshire County Council also has a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel. For bus journeys, this could include using seats more efficiently leading to fewer journeys, or smaller vehicles, being needed.

Prioritising alternative forms of transport assistance would bring about cost savings and better meet the needs of some of our service users because:

- Personal Transport Budgets can be a more suitable arrangement for a student, enabling families to arrange their own transport and be reimbursed for any expenses incurred.
- They can help in cases where suitable school transport is difficult to find (or not available at all) in the County Council's contracted local provider market, where students may require an adapted vehicle, or where the student requires skilled support tailored to their individual needs.
- They can provide the opportunity for a student to have, or to develop, greater independence – something that the County Council has a responsibility to promote, and that Department for Education statutory guidance recognises is an important part of preparing for adulthood that would help them lead fulfilling adult lives.

Alongside this prioritisation, it is proposed to develop Independent Travel Training for eligible students. This also helps promote independence, and could also result in the County Council providing transport that requires less support and at a lower financial and

environmental cost (for example, the student might no longer need a passenger assistant or could travel in a shared vehicle rather than a solo taxi).

How would the proposal be implemented?

If this proposal is agreed, the School Transport service would update its transport allocation processes to prioritise the consideration of Personal Transport Budgets and public transport passes in the first instance, before considering contracted transport.

Alongside this, an Independent Travel Training offer would be finalised. This would be offered to students who are assessed as being able to benefit.

Should this proposal be approved, it is expected that a new process would be introduced from Autumn 2025 onwards and could apply to new and existing transport arrangements, however the School Transport service is already happy to discuss with parents at any time about whether a PTB would be suitable.

What are the potential impacts?

This proposal would apply to both School Transport and Post-16 Transport users and could apply to both new and existing transport arrangements.

Some students with SEND may find it more challenging (or not possible) to navigate public transport independently, meaning that public transport passes may not be an option as part of their transport package. Personal Transport Budgets may offer more flexibility than County Council provided transport, so this could still be a good option for families of students who cannot use public transport.

In addition, Independent Travel Training could help students with SEND build confidence and independence skills in using public transport, meaning that the option of using shared or public transport could be available for more students.

Exceptional cases and the right to appeal

There is an existing mechanism in place for the School Transport service to consider whether in exceptional cases transport can be granted as an exception to policy. There is also a statutory right to appeal for any family who wishes to challenge a transport entitlement decision. This right of appeal covers decisions on whether a child is entitled to transport, and on the form of assistance offered.

What are the alternatives?

There are other approaches that we could take that are not proposed at this time. In developing this proposal, we have also considered the following:

- **Using manual audits to measure vehicle occupancy**

An alternative method of improving utilisation of vehicles would be to undertake further manual audits to establish an average occupancy of vehicles, and to allocate additional students to routes based on these observations. However, this is not being considered at this time because:

- Audits would only provide a snapshot in time, whereas the use of digital data would allow the service to identify trends across the week, month or year.
- Estimates would not be up to date, which could lead to higher demand for seats than those available.
- Audits would be less cost effective than using digital bus pass data, as they would require significant resources to complete.

- **Maintaining the current approaches to providing School Transport and Post-16 Transport**

This option is not being proposed because of the scale of the budget pressures faced by the County Council, and the legal requirement to operate within budget. Hampshire County Council also has a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel. For bus journeys, this could include using seats more efficiently leading to fewer journeys, or smaller vehicles, being needed.



Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A: Post-16 Transport Policy changes

Post-16 Transport

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>1. Commitment</p> <p>Hampshire County Council (the County Council) and its post-16 providers are committed to ensuring transport is available to enable students to access education and training as set out in this Policy. Support is provided either by the County Council or post-16 providers. This Policy applies for the 2025/2026 academic year only and sets out the support available.</p> <p>There is no automatic entitlement to free school or college transport once a student is over 16. The County Council has considered its resources and the travel to college opportunities for students. Students can attend a college of choice and, if needed, apply to their college’s student support for assistance.</p> <p>The cost and mechanical process of transporting young people with special educational needs is greater and more complex.</p> <p>The County Council recognises that families may need a transport service to ensure that 16+ students with SEND can access a place that is suitable for their needs and so do offer, under discretionary powers, a transport service that requires an annual parental contribution.</p>	<p>1. Commitment</p> <p>Hampshire County Council (the County Council) and its post-16 providers are committed to ensuring transport is available to enable students to access education and training as set out in this Policy. Support is provided either by the County Council or post-16 providers. This Policy applies for the 2025/2026 academic year only and sets out the support available.</p> <p>There is no automatic entitlement to free school or college transport once a student is over 16. The County Council has considered its resources and the travel to college opportunities for students. Students can attend a college of choice and, if needed, apply to their college’s student support for assistance.</p> <p>The cost and mechanical process of transporting young people with special educational needs is greater and more complex, and some families may not have resources available to support this more complex journey.</p> <p>The County Council recognises that some 16+ students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may need transport to ensure that they can access a place that is suitable for their needs and that in some cases their family will be on a low income and so will not be able to source or provide the required transport themselves. The County Council will therefore offer, under discretionary powers, a transport service for 16+ students with SEND from low-income families (as defined in Appendix 1) that requires an annual parental contribution.</p>

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>3. Qualification for support from the County Council for students attending colleges and schools with sixth forms (including academies)</p> <p>The County Council will assist with travel expenses for post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability. A parental contribution towards the cost of this transport will be required. This contribution will be uplifted annually by the March Consumer Price Index (CPI). For the purposes of the example below, a rate of 2.2% (based on the 12 months to August 2024) has been used to indicate the potential impact on the contributions.</p> <p>[A table of the latest pricing would be added here once the policy is finalised]</p> <p>A transport application will normally only be considered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or if the student has a disability which means they require transport arrangements to be provided.</p>	<p>3. Qualification for support from the County Council for students attending colleges and schools with sixth forms (including academies)</p> <p>The County Council will assist with travel expenses for post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability whose families are on a low income. A parental contribution towards the cost of this transport will be required. This contribution will be uplifted annually by the March Consumer Price Index (CPI).</p> <p>[A table of the latest pricing would be added here once the policy is finalised]</p> <p>A transport application will normally only be considered if the student has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a disability which means they require transport arrangements to be provided, and the student’s family are on a low income as defined in Appendix 1.</p>
<p>7. Independent Travel Training</p> <p>Independent Travel Training may be offered to eligible students with parental consent. Readiness to complete Independent Travel Training would be outlined in the EHCP or agreed by the County Council following a discussion with the school or college and parents. Once an eligible student has successfully completed Independent Travel Training, their travel arrangements will be reviewed.</p> <p>Note: Travel arrangements offered to an eligible student may change after their training has been completed to reflect their improved ability to travel to school independently.</p>	<p>7. Independent Travel Training</p> <p>Independent Travel Training may be offered to eligible students as part of their transport package. Readiness to complete Independent Travel Training would be outlined in the EHCP or agreed by the County Council following a discussion with the school or college and parents. Once an eligible student has successfully completed Independent Travel Training, their travel arrangements will be reviewed.</p> <p>Note: Travel arrangements offered to an eligible student may change after their training has been completed to reflect their improved ability to travel to school independently.</p>

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>Appendix 1</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Appendix 1</p> <p>Low-income families: The County Council will assist with travel expenses for post-16 students with special educational needs or a disability whose families are on a low income. Low-income families are defined as those where the student's parents are in receipt of any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income Support ▪ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance ▪ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance ▪ Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 ▪ The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit ▪ Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190) ▪ Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) ▪ Universal Credit <p>Families in receipt of free school meals (due to low income) also qualify as low-income families.</p>
<p>1. The following criteria apply additionally to students aged 16 or 17 in September 2025:</p> <p>Parental Assistance: The County Council expects that parents and carers take responsibility for facilitating their child's attendance in education where they are able to do so. Families/ applicants may apply for transport and explain their circumstances which make support from the County Council with transport necessary to enable their child to attend their place of education or training. All requests for transport will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>1. The following criteria apply additionally to students aged 16 or 17 in September 2025:</p> <p>Parental Assistance: The County Council expects that parents and carers take responsibility for facilitating their child's attendance in education where they are able to do so. This may include travelling alongside the child or young person to support their journey where this is necessary. Families/applicants may apply for transport and explain their circumstances which make support from the County Council with transport necessary to enable their child to attend their place of education or training.</p>

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>Charges: If transport is provided by the County Council, a parental contribution may be levied.</p> <p>No charge will be made when the student's parents are in receipt of any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income Support ▪ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance ▪ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance ▪ Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 ▪ The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit ▪ Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190) ▪ Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) ▪ Universal Credit <p>Families in receipt of free school meals (due to low income) are not required to pay the contribution.</p> <p>Families with a low income, but not in receipt of the above benefits, where the charge would reduce their income to around £16,190, or exceptional circumstances, may apply for a discretionary waiver or reduction in charge.</p>	<p>All requests for transport will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Charges: If transport is provided by the County Council, a parental contribution may be levied.</p>

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>2. The following criteria apply to students aged 18 when the transport starts in September 2025 or already 18 at the time of application or 19 or over and continuing on a course that they started before their 19th birthday:</p> <p>Parental assistance: There will be no expectation that a parent will assist with their adult child's transport arrangement, although parents who wish to do so will be welcome to support their adult child's transport arrangement.</p>	<p>2. The following criteria apply to students aged 18 when the transport starts in September 2025 or already 18 at the time of application or 19 or over and continuing on a course that they started before their 19th birthday:</p> <p>Parental assistance: There will be no expectation that a parent will assist with their adult child's transport arrangement, although parents who wish to do so will be welcome to support their adult child's transport arrangement.</p>
<p>Charges: If transport is provided by the County Council, a parental contribution may be levied.</p> <p>No charge will be made when the student's parents are in receipt of any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Income Support ▪ Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance ▪ Income-related Employment and Support Allowance ▪ Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 ▪ The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit ▪ Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190) ▪ Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit) ▪ Universal Credit <p>Families in receipt of free school meals (due to low income) are not required to pay the contribution.</p> <p>Families with a low income, but not in receipt of the above benefits, where the charge would reduce their income to around £16,190, or exceptional circumstances, may apply for a discretionary waiver or reduction in charge.</p>	<p>Charges: If transport is provided by the County Council, a parental contribution may be levied.</p>

Current Post-16 Policy Wording	Revised Post-16 Policy Wording
<p>The following applies to students aged 19 or over and starting a new course:</p> <p>Charges: If transport is provided, no contribution towards the cost of transport will be levied.</p>	<p>No change to this section.</p>

Appendix B: School Transport Policy changes

Both School Transport and Post-16 Transport

Proposal One: To reduce the number of unused seats by utilising bus pass usage data.	
Current School Transport Policy Wording	Revised School Transport Policy Wording
N/A	Add “ Usage of Transport Provision ” heading to Section 4 of the Contents table.
N/A	<p>Usage of Transport Provision</p> <p>4.41. The County Council reserves the right to monitor the usage of transport through electronic tickets, data from transport operators or by performing a census of passengers. The County Council will suspend or remove transport provision if the eligible child does not use the transport regularly. Parents will be notified if transport is removed for this reason. The parent can re-apply for transport, and the application will be assessed using the eligibility criteria described in this policy.</p>
Proposal Two: To increase flexibility to meet short-term variations in demand by using the full licensed capacity of buses.	
Current School Transport Policy Wording	Revised School Transport Policy Wording
<p>Suitability of Arrangements</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p>Suitability of Arrangements</p> <p>4.32. Transport arrangements may utilise the full capacity of the vehicle in exceptional circumstances. This may include standing capacity where the vehicle has a certified standing capacity as set out in Regulation 6 of the Public Service Vehicles (Carrying Capacity) Regulations 1984. This will include consideration of data on vehicle usage from transport operators, electronic ticketing and other sources.</p>

Proposal Three: To make discretionary transport more viable by asking parents to increase their financial contribution towards the cost of the transport.

Current School Transport Policy Wording

Revised School Transport Policy Wording

No Policy wording will change; however the revised contribution rates will be added to the existing discretionary rates section of the School Transport Policy.

Proposal Four: To promote the most independent forms of transport assistance by prioritising a Public Transport Season Ticket or Personal Transport Budget over contracted transport, where this is appropriate and more cost effective.

Current School Transport Policy Wording

Revised School Transport Policy Wording

Personal Transport Budgets

4.32. In certain circumstances, and subject to parental consent, the most suitable arrangement could be for the parent to provide the transport.

Personal Transport Budgets

4.32. Where it is found to be suitable, and subject to parental consent, the most cost-effective arrangement could be for the parent to provide the transport.

Review of Passenger Assistant suitability

3.1. A timescale for a planned review of Passenger Assistant allocation will be set at the same time as an eligibility decision is made.

3.2. The planned review timescale will be based on the child's needs and will typically be at the end of the academic year, at a change of school phase, or at the end of the child's compulsory school career.

3.3. Passenger Assistant allocation will also be reviewed if the County Council becomes aware of a change of circumstance, including where a parent notifies the County Council that the child's circumstances or needs have changed.

Review of the Transport Arrangements

3.1. A timescale for a planned review of transport arrangements, including Passenger Assistant allocation, will be set at the same time as an eligibility decision is made.

3.2. The planned review timescale will be based on the child's needs and will typically be at the end of the academic year, at a change of school phase, or at the end of the child's compulsory school career.

3.3. Transport arrangements, including Passenger Assistant allocation, will also be reviewed if the County Council becomes aware of a change of circumstance, including where a parent notifies the County Council that the child's circumstances or needs have changed or where Independent Travel Training has enabled a child to travel more independently.



Hampshire County Council
Future Services Consultation
Spring 2025

Published March 2025

