



Proposed changes to home to school transport from September 2023 consultation

Open date: 19 October 2022

Close date: 4 December 2022

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Overview

We want your views on proposed changes to council-run school bus charges (Spare Seats scheme), our Home to School Transport Policy (0 to 25 year olds) and our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024 to make them easier to understand.

We have reviewed how we charge for spare seats on school buses, our Home to School Transport Policy and our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement.

This consultation is your opportunity to tell us your views on proposals for:

- Spare Seats Scheme charging options
- Updates to our home to school transport policies

Any changes will apply for the 2023 to 2024 academic year onwards and will apply to both new and existing customers.

Spare Seats Scheme charging options

We run school buses for children who are eligible for free school transport.

After we have allocated seats to all young people who are eligible for free school transport, the Spare Seats Scheme offers paid-for seats on timetabled Council-run school buses.

In 2021 to 2022, Buckinghamshire Council spent approximately £4 million on school buses. At the same time, income from spare seat ticket sales was £0.5 million - contributing towards the overall costs of running school buses.

The current Spare Seats Scheme charge depends on age, distance and whether boarding within or outside of Buckinghamshire. Customers have told us that this structure is complex and difficult to understand.

We are proposing to simplify school bus ticket charges for the Spare Seats Scheme. The proposed changes will even out the cost of travel over a child's whole school career by:

- reducing the cost of post-16 travel for some Spare Seats passengers
- making it easier for parents and carers to know upfront how much they will have to pay before applying for a seat

We want to know your preference between three proposed Spare Seat scheme charging options:

- **Option 1: Distance banding** (small difference between distance bands)
- **Option 2: Distance banding** (medium difference between distance bands)
- **Option 3: Flat fee** (regardless of distance)

Under all proposed options:

- We are removing the price increase that may apply when Spare Seat customers reach sixth form age (post-16)
 - No post-16 young person will see an age-related increase in the cost of their spare seat while they continue to travel on the same bus to the same school
 - The parent / carer of an 11 year old child will be able to plan ahead. They will know they won't be subject to an age-related price increase once their child is post-16 - if they continue to travel on the same bus to the same school
- Our Spare Seats scheme charges aim to be easier to understand
- Non-Buckinghamshire Council residents will pay a higher fee to customers who live within Buckinghamshire

There are no other changes proposed to the Spare Seat Scheme offer, application process or prioritisation policy. Only the Spare Seat charges will change from the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

Proposed changes to school transport policy

The Home to School Transport Policy sets out our approach to providing transport to schools / educational settings for students up to 19 years old (up to 25 years for students with special educational needs and disabilities).

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement sets out transport arrangements for students aged 16 and over. It specifies the transport arrangements we consider necessary for sixth form students to attend education or training.

We are proposing some minor changes to our school transport policies to make them clearer and easier to understand. These updates are highlighted in yellow in the draft policy documents below. We want to hear your views on whether these updates have made our policies easier to understand.

We are also proposing a 3% increase to the charge for Post-16 students with SEND using Buckinghamshire Council arranged transport. This is below the rate of inflation (9.9% as of September 2022) and despite rising transport costs.

We are not proposing any further substantial changes to the Home to School Transport Policy or the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2023 to 2024.

Related documents

Before you respond to this consultation, please have a look at the following documents. These are available at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-consultation.

- Spare Seats charging options
- Draft Home to School Transport Policy (0 to 25 year olds)
- Draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2023 to 2024

Online events to find out more

We are running two online events via Microsoft Teams Live to find out more about the proposals and ask any questions. You will need to book to attend at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-consultation

- Spare Seats Scheme charging options. Thursday 10 November 2022, at 7pm to 8pm
- Proposed changes to school transport policy. Wednesday 16 November 2022, at 7pm to 8pm

How to have your say

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-consultation
- Complete, and return, a printed version of the survey below
- Email us at H2STpolicyconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- Write to us at Home to school transport consultation 2022, Client Transport, Buckinghamshire Council, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA

If you have any questions about this consultation , please email us at H2STpolicyconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk, phone us on 01296 387439 or sign up to one of our consultation events.

Please tell us your views by midnight on Sunday 4 December 2022.

What happens next

We will consider all the feedback we receive before deciding on the new Spare Seat Scheme charging approach and the proposed changes to Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement. The decision will be made by the Leader of Buckinghamshire Council in April 2023.

Once the decision has been made, we will revise the spare seat charges for September 2023 and publish the new Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement.

They will apply to school transport from September 2023. We will update this page with the outcome of the consultation.

Privacy

We will use the information you provide here only for this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions about data and privacy, please email us on dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Or write to our Data Protection

Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

Printed consultation survey

This consultation is your opportunity to tell us your views on proposals for:

- Spare Seats Scheme charging options
- Updates to our home to school transport policies

1. Do you want to respond to the Spare Seats Scheme charging option proposals for 2023 to 2024?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No (Go to question 7)

Spare Seats Scheme charging proposals for 2023 to 2024

We want to know your preference between three charging options for the Spare Seat Scheme for 2023 to 2024:

Option 1: Distance banding (small difference between distance bands)

- For Buckinghamshire Council residents, the charge will depend on the distance travelled between our Council-run school bus bus-stop and school.
- There is a flat charge for non-residents.
- This proposal reduces the existing distance bands from 5 to 3. There is a £22 and £21 increase respectively between distance bands 2 and 3.
- The maximum increase that a Buckinghamshire resident customer will pay is capped at 9.9% (an extra £80 per year or £6.67 per month).
- There is a maximum reduction in price for Buckinghamshire students of sixth form age of £464 per year (34.4%).

The proposed option 1 distance bandings related charges for 2023 to 2024 are:

Customer	Distance	Proposed charge for 2023 to 2024
Buckinghamshire Council resident	0 to 3.99 miles	£843
	4 to 6.99 miles	£865
	7 miles or more	£886
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	Any distance	£1,200

Option 2: Distance banding (medium difference between distance bands)

- For Buckinghamshire Council residents, the charge will depend on the distance travelled between our Council-run school bus bus-stop and school.
- There is a flat charge for non-residents.
- This proposal reduces the existing distance bands from 5 to 3. There is a £53 increase between each band.
- The charge for distance band 1 (0 to 3.99 miles) is lower than in Option 1.
- The maximum increase that a Buckinghamshire resident customer will pay is capped at 13.2% (an extra £106 per year or £8.83 per month).
- There is a maximum reduction in price for Buckinghamshire students of sixth form age of £438 per year (32.4%).

The proposed option 2 distance bandings and charges for 2023 to 2024 are:

Customer	Distance	Proposed charge for 2023 to 2024
Buckinghamshire Council resident	0 to 3.99 miles	£806
	4 to 6.99 miles	£859
	7 miles or more	£912
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	Any distance	£1,200

Option 3: Flat rate proposal

- The charge is set regardless of distance travelled, based on whether you are Buckinghamshire Council resident or not.
- There is a maximum reduction in price for Buckinghamshire students of sixth form age of £482 p.a. (35.7%).

The proposed flat rate charges for 2023 to 2024 are:

Customer	Proposed charge for 2023 to 2024
Buckinghamshire Council resident	£868
Non-Buckinghamshire Council resident	£1,200

All proposed charging proposals:

- Remove the price increase that may apply for Post-16 Spare Seats customers, making it easier to plan ahead
- Aim to make our Spare Seats scheme charges easier to understand

- Charge non-residents a higher fee than customers who live within Buckinghamshire
- Have been modelled to:
 - Make no additional income for the Council
 - Achieve zero percentage increase on average across all Buckinghamshire school bus ticket (Spare Seats Scheme) customers. We based our calculations on 2022 to 2023 Spare Seats prices and 2022 to 2023 Spare Seat passenger profile
 - Show comparison of all options following a 3% uplift to 2022 to 2023 Spare Seat fees

As with current charges, payments can be made termly or yearly online, or by monthly Direct Debit over 8 months.

What would these options mean for Spare Seats customers?

Example 1: Theo, age 12 and travels 3 miles

Theo is 12 years old, lives in Lacey Green and travels 3 miles to school. Under the current Spare Seat fee structure his parents will be paying £806 for his seat in 2023 to 2024.

Under the Council's proposed changes his parents would see the following change for the 2023 to 2024 academic year:

- **Option 1 - Distance banding** (small difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £843. This is £37 or 4.6% (£3.08 per month) more than they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 2 - Distance banding** (medium difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £806, which is the same as they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 3 - Flat rate.** The new fee would be £868. This is £62 or 7.7% (£5.17 per month) more than they would have paid under the current charging structure

Example 2: Imogen, age 14, and travels 4.5 miles

Imogen is 14 years old, lives in Aston Clinton and travels 4.5 miles to school. Under the current Spare Seat fee structure her parents will be paying £806 for her seat in 2023 to 2024 (current pre-16 price is regardless of distance).

Under the Council's proposed changes her parents would see the following change for the 2023 to 2024 academic year:

- **Option 1 - Distance banding** (small difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £865. This is £59 or 7.3% (£4.92 per month) more than they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 2 - Distance banding** (medium difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £859. This is £53 or 6.6% (£4.42 per month) more than they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 3 - Flat rate.** The new fee would be £868. This is £62 or 7.7% (£5.17 per month) more than they would have paid under the current charging structure

Example 3: Tariq, age 17 and travels 10 miles

Tariq is 17 years old, lives in Twyford and travels 10 miles to school. Under the current Spare Seat fee structure his parents will be paying £1,350 for his seat in 2023 to 2024 (current post-16 price is distance-banded).

Under the Council's proposed changes his parents would see the following change for the 2023 to 2024 academic year:

- **Option 1 - Distance banding** (small difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £886. This is £464 or 34.4% (£38.67 per month) less than they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 2 - Distance banding** (medium difference between distance bands). The new fee would be £912. This is £438 or 32.4% (£36.50 per month) less than they would have paid under the current charging structure
- **Option 3 - Flat rate.** The new fee would be £868. This is £482 or 35.7% (£40.17 per month) less than they would have paid under the current charging structure

Other options considered

We considered other options that were not taken forward:

- **Continue with the current scheme**
 - Parent / carer feedback has been that the current pay rates are very difficult to understand because different rates apply. Charges

depend on age, distance and whether boarding within or outside of Buckinghamshire.

- Current scheme has 13 different price points and it is not possible to know upfront what families will have to pay before applying.
- Current scheme has a large fee increase for most pupils when they reach sixth-form age, even if they are continuing at the same school and travelling on the same bus.
- **Higher fees for both distance banding and flat rate proposals**
 - We have considered higher charge amounts as the contract costs that we are paying for school buses are rising significantly.
 - However, even though our costs are continuing to increase, we are aware that there is a limit on how much extra parents / carers can afford in the current difficult financial climate.
 - For this reason, we have applied only a 3% increase to our 2022 to 2023 charges to enable comparison to proposed charges for 2023 to 2024 academic year.
- **Closing the Spare Seats scheme**
 - Buses would run with a limited number of vacant seats. This does not align with our climate change ambitions. Result in a loss of income which helps fund our services.

1. Which Spare Seats Scheme charging proposal for 2023 to 2024 do you prefer?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Option 1: Distance banding (small difference between distance bands)
- Option 2: Distance banding (medium difference between distance bands)
- Option 3: Flat rate
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:

2. How easy are the spare seat charging proposals for 2023 to 2024 to understand?

Please tick (✓) one option for each proposal

	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy	I don't know
Option 1: Distance banding (small difference between bands)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option 2: Distance banding (medium difference between bands)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Option 3: Flat rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you think we could make Spare Seats Scheme charging easier to understand, please tell us how:

3. If you have any other comments about the Spare Seats Scheme charging proposals for 2023 to 2024, please tell us them here:

Buckinghamshire Council Spare Seat Scheme

4. Are you currently paying for a spare seat on a Buckinghamshire Council run school bus?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

5. How far does your child travel to their school / education setting?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Not applicable
- 0 to 3.99 miles
- 4 to 6.99 miles
- 7 miles or more
- I don't know

End of survey for Spare Seats charging proposals

6. Do you want to respond to the updates to our home to school transport policies?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No (Go to question 10)

Updates to our home to school transport policies

We are proposing some minor changes to make the policies clearer and easier to understand. These changes include:

- The types of travel assistance Buckinghamshire Council may offer
- The approach for elective home education (EHE) and education other than at school (EOTAS)
- Criteria for travel assistance for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 16 to 19
- The Personal Transport Budget offer
- Transport during the school / college day. Clarity of what is and what is not provided by Buckinghamshire Council's transport team

The proposed changes are highlighted in yellow in the draft Home to School Transport Policy and draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement documents.

We are also proposing a 3% increase to the charge for Post-16 students with SEND using Buckinghamshire Council arranged transport. This is below the rate of inflation (9.9% as of September 2022) and despite rising transport costs.

The charge is based on the number of days travelled at the start of the academic year, and is a contribution to the cost of providing transport:

Number of days travelled per week	Annual charge for 2023 to 2024	Reduced annual charge for 2023 to 2024 for evidenced financial hardship
5 days per week	£954	£636
4 days per week	£764	£508
3 days per week	£572	£382
2 days per week	£382	£254
1 day per week	£190	£127

As with current charges, payments can be made monthly or annually by Direct Debit.

We are not proposing any further substantial changes to the Home to School Transport Policy or the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2023 to 2024.

7. Please tell us your comments about the proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2023 to 2024:

8. How easy is the draft Home to School Transport Policy and draft Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024 to understand?

Please tick (✓) one option for each proposal

	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy	I don't know
Home to School Transport Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Post-16 Transport Policy Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. If you have any other comments about the Home to School Transport Policy or Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024, please tell us them here:

About you

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details.

10. Which of the following describe you?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- I live in Buckinghamshire
- I work in Buckinghamshire
- Parent / carer of a young person aged under 16 in education in Buckinghamshire
- Parent / carer of a young person aged 16 or over in education in Buckinghamshire
- A student aged under 16 in education in Buckinghamshire
- A student aged 16 or over in education in Buckinghamshire
- An educational professional in Buckinghamshire
- I represent an education provider in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a transport operator in Buckinghamshire
- I represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a community or voluntary group in Buckinghamshire
- I am an elected representative in Buckinghamshire
- I work for Buckinghamshire Council
- Other (please give details below):

11. How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Local media (newspaper, radio or TV)
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter)
- Nextdoor
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Buckinghamshire Council newsletter
- Email from Buckinghamshire Council
- From Buckinghamshire Council staff
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Email from a local partner organisation or SEND setting
- Email from your child's school / education setting
- Word of mouth
- Local Community Board
- Local Councillor
- Local Parish / Town Council
- Other (please give details below):

12. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation (e.g. an education provider or transport operator)?

Please tick (✓) one option

- As an individual (go to question 14)
- On behalf of an organisation

On behalf of an organisation

13. Please provide the following details:

Name of organisation:

Your job title:

End of survey if responding on behalf of an organisation

About you

14. What is your age?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different age groups.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- Over 85
- Prefer not to say

15. Are you:

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different sexes.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

16. Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of disabled people, people with impairments and people with long term health conditions.

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Disability / disabilities
- Impairment(s)
- Long term health condition(s)
- No
- Prefer not to say

17. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different ethnicities.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Asian - British
- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani
- Any other Asian background - Please give details below
- Black - African
- Black - British
- Black - Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background - Please give details below
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background - Please give details below
- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or English traveller
- White - Irish Traveller
- White - European
- Any other White background - Please give details below
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Arab British
- Other ethnic group - Please give details below
- Prefer not to say

Please give other details here:

End of the survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

Please return your completed survey by midnight on **4 December 2022**.

You can:

- Email it to H2STpolicyconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- Post it to Home to school transport consultation 2022, Client Transport, Buckinghamshire Council, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA