

Faith Transport Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) I want to talk to someone about this consultation on faith transport
- A) The best way you can make your views known is to fill in the response form and/or attend one of the public meetings. To book a place at a public meeting call 01438 737350. To discuss other aspects of this consultation phone the Customer Service Centre on 01438 737500.
- 2) My child receives free faith transport to his primary school at the moment; will I continue to receive assistance after these changes?
- A) Yes. Your child will continue to receive free faith transport to his primary school for as long as your child remains at their current school, and your child lives at the current address.

Note: If a child attends a secondary school and receives faith transport, they will remain unaffected by these changes as long as they remain at the school, until the end of Year 11, and reside at the same address.

- 3) My child is at primary school in Year 6, transferring to a secondary faith school in September 06. Will my family be affected by these changes?
- A) No. If your child is due to transfer to secondary school for admission September 2006, the current arrangements will apply.
- 4) I am a Muslim; you have not mentioned Muslims.
- A) We do not have any Muslim schools in Hertfordshire, nor do we transport any families to Muslim schools, therefore we have not mentioned the Muslim community.
- 5) I am a Catholic and you say that these changes will make the transport policy equitable. I disagree: Catholics have a right to a Catholic education.
- A) Parents have a right to express parental preferences with regard to the education for their child – but that is not the same as a right to attend any particular school. However, under the proposed new transport policy we would not normally provide free transport on grounds of faith. New pupils, including siblings of existing pupils, starting at a faith school from September 2007 would not be entitled to free transport, unless it is their closest school and over the statutory distance from their home.

Note: Statutory distances i.e more than 2 miles for children under the age of 8 and more than 3 miles for children aged 8 and over.

- 6) What will happen if I want to send my child to a faith school outside of Hertfordshire, will they receive free faith transport under a revised policy?
- A) Free transport would be provided to a school outside Hertfordshire only if there was no other suitable place within the statutory distance. Parents have a right to express parental preferences with regard to the education for their child. However, under the proposed new transport policy we would not normally provide free transport on grounds of faith. New pupils, including siblings of existing pupils, starting at a faith school from September 2007 would not be entitled to free transport, unless it is their closest school and over the statutory distance from their home. This policy also applies to faith schools outside of Hertfordshire.
- 7) You are talking about phasing this in, when will the bus to my child's school stop running?
- A) We anticipate that, in the short term, much of the school bus network would remain, but with charges based on an assisted places scheme. Parents would need to consider school transport arrangements when expressing preferences for school places.
- 8) My oldest child attends a faith secondary school; will the younger child in the family also receive free denominational transport?
- A) No. We are consulting on not offering transport to younger siblings as they join a new school, where their elder sibling attends.
- 9) In the consultation paper there is mention of the need to save money to meet efficiency targets; what does this mean?
- A) All local authorities have a duty to make efficiency savings. Currently faith transport costs Hertfordshire County Council £3.4 m a year, of which £2 million is for the secondary sector. It is anticipated that considerable savings would build up over a six year period. It is estimated that a saving on average of approximately £400,000 a year would accrue.
- 10) My child attends a non-denominational school and benefits from free transport; will they be affected?
- A) No

- 11) I believe my child has a right to single-sex education and an entitlement to transport; is this correct?
- A) No, this is not a legal right under legislation, however if your child is allocated a place at a single sex school and it is your nearest suitable school and it is located over 3 miles from your home, you would qualify for free transport.
- 12) Have you considered the impact on the environment, particularly as one of the strategic aims of the county council is to reduce congestion?
- A) Yes. In the short term much of the school bus network will remain but with some changes based on an assisted places scheme. We continually strive to adopt environmentally friendly strategies e.g school travel plans and walking bus routes.
- 13) If these changes go ahead I can foresee a situation where, in several years time, there will be no bus service from my area to faith schools. Will the county council provide a replacement public service instead?
- A) This would be reviewed by the county council and would take into account demand.
- 14) How many local authorities in the country have adopted such an approach?
- A) A number of local authorities have considered such a change. We already know that Essex and Luton have reviewed and implemented new home to school faith transport policies.
- 15) How do we know you will listen to our comments and feedback?
- A) All comments and feedback will be noted and taken on board so that we can consider whether or not we wish to amend our original proposal.
- 16) I understand that the faith transport budget is £3.4 million per year. Please could you put this figure in context for me.
- A) £3.4million is 0.535% (i.e. £3.4 million as a percentage of £635.742million) of the total education budget.
£3.4million is 4.877% (i.e. £3.4million as a percentage of £69.709million) of the non-schools budget.