

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH EXECUTIVE MEMBERS

22 May 2025

Home to School Travel Contribution Fees Academic Year 2025-26

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide recommendations on: -

- Home to School Travel contribution charges; and
- The continuation of the provision of a 50% discount to pupils and students from low income families.

1.2 To provide a summary of the current terms and conditions associated with the purchase of a paid for permit.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 This report details the current level of home to school travel contribution charges and identifies a rate of increase to be applied for the academic year 2025-26 for consideration by the Corporate Director.

2.2 The report also details the Terms and Conditions associated with the use of home to school travel utilising a paid permit and recommends that the current terms and conditions continue to be utilised unamended.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Home to School Travel contribution charges are currently levied in respect of

- Post 16 Home to School Travel; and
- Paid travel permits, which are made available to purchase in respect of spare capacity in existing dedicated transport provided for eligible pupils.

3.2 There are currently:

- 323 students who are eligible for, and who utilise, Post 16 Home to School Travel; and
- 562 pupils who have a paid travel permit.

3.3 Arising from a previous review of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy in 2018-19, it was agreed that the two Home to School Transport contribution charges should be aligned, and this was subsequently achieved with effect from the academic year 2023-24.

3.4 In 2019, following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of a proposed increase to the contribution charges, a recommendation was made that annual inflationary increases should be applied to the charge in accordance with the Corporate Fees and Charges policy. The Council's Fees and Charges policy notes that, 'it is considered that as a minimum the fees and charges already charged by the Council are to be adjusted in line with inflation each year'.

3.3 The table below shows the annual charges that have been made since the academic year 2020-21:

	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/24	2024/25
Post 16	£600	£618	£650	£747.50	£792
Paid Permit	£490	£550	£600	£747.50	£792

4.0 Background

4.1 Home to school travel may be an issue within North Yorkshire, including for:

- Post 16 students, noting that students are required to remain in education, employment or training until the age of 18; and
- Pupils who are of statutory school age but who attend a school other than one for which they would be eligible to receive assistance with home to school travel under the council's published policy.

4.2 The geographical profile of the county impacts on different communities; apart from those that are situated in the larger towns in the county, many schools and further education providers are not typically served by regular public transport services.

4.3 Several schools within the county, and further education providers both within and outside of North Yorkshire, provide subsidised and / or paid for transport services to enable pupils and students to attend their establishments.

These are provided at a range of different costs to parents, examples include the following schools and sixth forms within North Yorkshire, who charge the annual fees indicated:

Harrogate Grammar School	£730 - £850, dependent upon route
Malton School	£425 - £525, dependent upon distance
Richmond School	£1,045 - £1,140 dependent upon distance
St Francis Xavier School, Richmond	£845.50 - £1,178 dependent upon distance

The following are examples of colleges who provide transport to North Yorkshire students: -

York College (for 2024/25)	Up to £1296, dependent upon route
Askham Bryan College (for 2025/26)	Up to £807.30 dependent upon route

4.4 However, a significant number of applications for post 16 transport continue to be from students who are attending specific provision which is not local to them or accessible via alternative means.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 The Council's expenditure in respect of Home to School Travel for the financial year 2024-25 was forecast to be £50.49 million. This represents a 74% increase in the period since the financial year 2021-22.

5.2 During the period 2021-22 to 2024-25 (academic years) the contribution fees have increased by the following amounts: -

- Post 16 28%
- Paid permits 44%

5.3 The income arising from the contribution charges represent a contribution towards the overall cost of transport but does not cover the full cost of service delivery.

5.4 The table below details the income achieved from Home to School Travel contributions during the last 5 years: -

Academic year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 (estimate)
Contribution income	£416,040	£514,499	£553,791	£577,817	£622,782

5.5 In determining the charge, consideration is required to be provided to the level of discount that should be provided for pupils / students from low-income families. The council currently offers a 50% discount utilising the DfE's statutory guidance relating to the extended rights for home to school travel to define the eligibility criteria.

5.6 The level of discount that is offered to pupils / students from low-income families differs between local authorities, and ranges from no discount to a 100% reduction. This report includes a recommendation that the Council should continue to offer a 50% reduction.

5.7 The Council's Fees and Charges policy notes that, 'it is considered that as a minimum the fees and charges already charged by the Council are to be adjusted in line with inflation each year'. However, the policy requires that Corporate Directors review fees and charges annually, taking account of a number of factors, including:

- Inflationary pressures; and
- Service-level budget targets

5.8 Guidance issued by the Director of Resources in respect of fees and charges for the financial year 2025-26 is that they should rise by a minimum of 3.2%

5.9 An increase in the contribution fee of 3.2% for 2025-26 academic year would result in the contribution charge being £818 per year for both Post 16 and paid permits.

5.10 The table below breaks down the charge to a daily level and provides information based upon both 5-day weeks, and 3-day weeks so that it reflects the timetable for some Post 16 providers for 38-week and 36-week provision.

Year	Contribution	£	3-day x 36 weeks (540hr)	Price per trip	5 day x 38 week	Price per trip
2021/22	Full rate	£618	£5.72	£2.86	£3.25	£1.63

	Low Income	£309	£2.86	£1.43	£1.63	£.082
2022/23	Full Rate	£650	£6.02	£3.01	£3.42	£1.71
	Low Income	£325	£3.01	£1.51	£1.71	£0.85
2023/24	Full rate	£747.50	£6.92	£3.46	£3.93	£1.96
	Low income	£373.75	£3.46	£1.73	£1.96	£0.98
2024/25	Full rate	£792	£7.33	£3.66	£4.16	£2.08
	Low income	£396	£3.66	£1.83	£2.08	£1.04
2025/26	Full rate	£818	£7.57	£3.79	£4.31	£2.15
(3.2%)	Low Income	£409	£3.79	£1.89	£2.15	£1.08

NB – Annual and daily figures shown have been subject to rounding.

- 5.11 Since December 2022, the government has been operating a programme to encourage public bus travel in which a cap was agreed with participating operators, including a number of operators in North Yorkshire. During 2025 the cap for single bus fares is £3.

6.0 Paid Travel Permits – Terms and Conditions

- 6.1 The criteria via which pupils are eligible for assistance with home to school travel are defined in the Council's Home to School Travel Policy. The majority of the council's home to school travel arrangements for eligible pupils and Post 16 students are established prior to the commencement of each school year. Only after this has taken place will any spare capacity be made available to pupils via a paid permit.
- 6.2 The Terms and Conditions provide, at point 5, the ability for the council to withdraw the permit through the provision of one week's notice. The permits can be withdrawn for several reasons, including:
- If the allocated seat is required for a pupil who is eligible for assistance with home to school travel; or
 - If a reduction in vehicle capacity is possible during the course of an academic year
- 6.3 The rationale for the potential withdrawal of a permit is to avoid any additional costs could be incurred if additional transport was required to be commissioned to pupils who are eligible for assistance with home to school travel but where spare seats were being occupied by non-eligible pupils. The extent of the additional cost would be subject to provision requirements and the outcome of a procurement exercise. Furthermore, savings arising from a reduction in vehicle capacity on an individual route may be delayed, if the larger vehicle continues to be available for pupils with paid for permits.
- 6.4 This report recommends that the Terms and Conditions for paid permits are maintained in their current form for the next academic year, but that the number of permits that are withdrawn annually are monitored and reported and included as part of the post implementation review (PIR) of the 2024 home to school travel policy which is expected to be completed in summer 2026.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility under Section 508B of the Education Act 1996 to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for 'eligible' children. Where transport is provided then this is required to be free of charge.
- 7.2 Schedule 35B of the Education Act defines eligible children as those categories of children of compulsory school age (5-16).
- 7.3 Local authorities are able to use discretionary powers to provide travel assistance to students over the compulsory school age. These arrangements do not have to be provided free of charge.
- 7.4 Whilst Post 16 provision is beyond the statutory school age, local authorities have a duty to publish an annual transport policy statement outlining what the authority will offer in terms of assistance by 31st May for the next academic year.
- 7.5 Local authorities may ask learners and their parents for a contribution to transport costs when exercising their discretion to assist, however they should:
- ensure that any contribution is affordable for learners and their parents.
 - ensure that there are arrangements in place to support those families on low income.
 - consider the likely duration of learning and ensure that transport policies do not adversely affect particular groups.
- 7.6 The DfE published Statutory Guidance for home to school travel for children of compulsory school age in June 2023 and updated that guidance in January 2024.
- 7.7 The DfE indicated an intention to publish updated guidance in respect of post-16 home to school travel during 2024. This guidance has not yet been updated.
- 7.8 The council agreed that it would not make any significant changes to the post-16 policy statement at the time of the recent review of the home to school travel policy, and it was excluded from the policy review in 2024.
- 7.9 The DfE last published guidance for Post 16 Transport in January 2019. The council's current policy statement is compliant with the legislation and current guidance.

PSVAR

- 7.10 In April 2022 operators and LA's received information from the Department for Transport (DfT) regarding the launch of medium-term exemptions from the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 (PSVAR).
- 7.11 From 1 July 2022, the medium-term exemptions replaced the previous system of short-term exemptions for Home to School (HTS) and Rail Replacement (RR) services. These exemptions were qualified exemptions that required operators to take specific steps to make their HTS and RR fleet progressively more compliant with PSVAR within a specified timeframe, while allowing essential HTS and RR services to continue operating. The exemptions will be valid until 31 July 2026.

- 7.12 All contracted operators have confirmed that they have received exemption certificates from the DfT. This means that they have agreed to meet the requirements of the new medium term exemption guidance, and the Council were able to charge for services are provided.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken.
- 8.2 The assessment identifies that the provision of both Post 16 travel and access to home to school travel for pupils who are not eligible for assistance under the terms of the Home to School Travel policy are discretionary services and represent a commitment by the council to support young people in accessing education.
- 8.3 The assessment identifies that any increase in the contribution charge has a disproportionate effect upon young people and their families, and also upon people from rural communities. The impact upon people from rural communities is mitigated through the application of a standard charge that applies irrespective of the distance travelled.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An initial climate change impact assessment form has been completed in respect of this report. No climate change implications are anticipated to arise as a result of the update to the contribution charges.

10.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 The council's arrangements for home to school travel enable it to fulfil its statutory responsibilities. Through continued discretionary provision, including the provision of Post 16 travel and paid permits the council assists in providing young people with access to education.
- 10.2 The council's expenditure in respect of home to school travel has increased significantly during recent financial years and it is estimated that the expenditure during the financial year 2024-25 will have amounted to £50.49 million. However, the contribution rate charged for both post 16 travel and paid permits has not increased proportionally to the overall rate of expenditure and, therefore, the income raised from the charges has fallen as a proportion of the overall budget.
- 10.3 The Terms and Conditions associated with the use of the paid permits, and specifically the provision that enables the withdrawal of a permit, assist the council in maximising the efficiency with which transport is provided when either:
- in year school admissions result in additional pupils becoming eligible for assistance with home to school travel or
 - reviews of transport arrangements identify opportunities for savings to be achieved through the removal of services or the commissioning of smaller vehicles.

11.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The recommendations set out below enable the council to:
Increase the contribution charge relating to Post 16 Travel and Paid Permits and maintain assistance to pupils and families from low-income households.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- i) The council continue to offer 50% discount in respect of the contribution charges for Post 16 travel and paid permits.
- ii) The Corporate Director approves the cost of the contribution rate for the academic year 2025-26 (£818 full rate and £409 low-income rate); and
- iii) The Terms and Conditions for the paid permits remain in place with monitoring to be undertaken and reported alongside the post implementation review of the home to school travel policy in summer 2026.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Home to School Travel Policy
Fees and Charges Policy

Report Author – *Jon Holden, Head of Strategic Planning*
Presenter of Report – *Jon Holden, Head of Strategic Planning*

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT IF ANY REPORTS / APPENDICES INCLUDE SIGNATURES THESE MUST BE REMOVED / DELETED PRIOR TO SENDING REPORTS / APPENDICES TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES. Appendices should include an Equality Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment where appropriate