



## Home to School Transport Consultation

The disruption of the snow last week has given me the opportunity to focus the end of February's newsletter on the Local Authority's announcement this week of a consultation on a new policy for funding home to school transport.

<https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/HometoSchoolTravelandTransport/consultationHome>

The consultation is aimed at reducing the costs of providing transport for large numbers of children across the county, and where possible encouraging their family to move towards the child walking to school, using public transport, or accessing a personal budget to pay mileage for the family to get the child to the school themselves. There are certain statutory duties on local authorities regarding providing transport, but as you can imagine, when public funding is so tight the county has to look very hard at what justification there would be to continue to provide transport beyond these limits.

It may look as though the consultation is only about post-16 students, but Natalie Dayer, our OSLO, has identified that the details also actually describe cuts to transport for out-of-school activities and there is a 24 page document about transport for 5-16 year old children as well as the post-16 students.

We are very keen to promote independence for our children in all areas of their lives, but achieving a safe level of skills to enable fully independent travel is not typical for our students. For our Post-16 students and our nursery children the proposal to remove free transport to your most local or available school is greatly concerning, and for all of our children the limitations planned on support to travel to out-of-school clubs is a real blow after much intense and very hard work by Natalie and others within Oxfordshire County Council itself. The overall picture is likely to impact badly on children's attendance, yet, ironically, attendance is a high priority for Oxfordshire.

I would strongly encourage you to look into the consultation and please do what you can to respond with your views. I am sure that you will be fully aware of the ongoing cuts/restrictions in public services, and much as we might all wish to complain about a cut to this service, we cannot ignore the fact that continuing to spend on one service simply transfers the problem to other areas of work. There is no doubt a balance needing to be struck, but it should be one that respects the needs and abilities of our children with special educational needs and disabilities, and which understands the real pressures that families of these children face every day.

If you are actually of the view that your own child could indeed be making their way to school without the need for a place on county transport then of course do talk to the county transport team, but at the school we do understand that there might be lots of safety issues to consider and even practical problems such as having siblings who attend other schools and no way of getting everyone to the different schools all to start and finish at the same times.

I am of course responding to the consultation on behalf of the school. But please don't think that this means your voice isn't required; no matter what your stance on this might be, it's really essential that Oxfordshire gets the fullest understanding of the views of all of us who live and work here about this proposal.