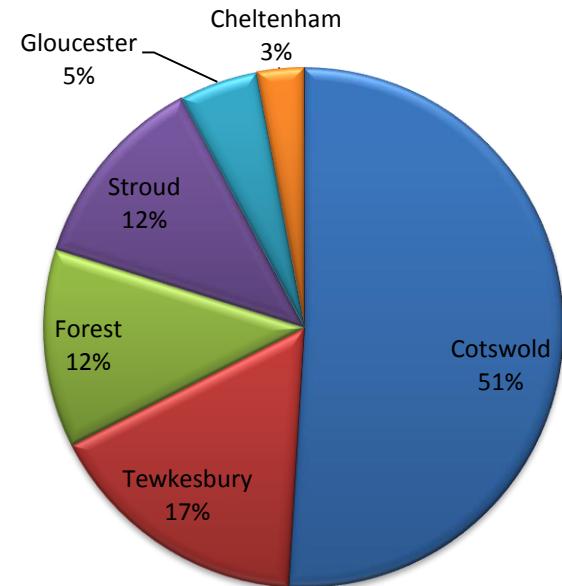


Consultation on the withdrawal of automatic subsidised travel assistance for mainstream post 16 learners was undertaken between 12th October 2015 and 15th January 2016 with all key stakeholders.

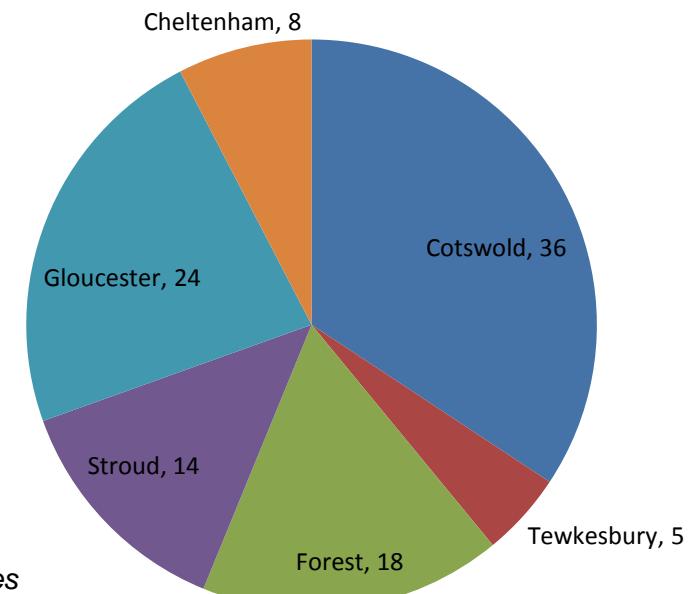
This report provides feedback from the survey.

The graphs below show a comparison between those districts currently most supported with post 16 transport and those in which responders to the consultation said they lived. Response to feedback was fairly consistent with those areas most impacted with the main exception being Gloucester City – with very little assistance being provided compared to the feedback received.

Post 16 transport provision 2015/6



Responses to consultation



SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

There were 118 responses to the online survey and 2 written responses to the proposal. Additionally, 7 parents/carers and young people were spoken to during drop-in sessions.

Feedback from the survey indicated that the priority of key factors when choosing a school or college was:

1. Course content
2. Reputation of the school/college
3. Cost of travel
4. Distance from home

When asked how they would prefer to travel to school or college, the options were put in the following preference order:

1. Ability to continue previous travel arrangements (e.g. travelling with other learners in year 7-11)
2. Ability to choose local services (e.g. using public transport)
3. Ability to travel independently (e.g. using own transport – car, moped etc.)
4. Ability to be healthy (e.g. walking, cycling)

At 33%, there was the same preference rating for being able to continue to use the school bus and for using public services - however 25% said that they had no alternative option to using the school bus due to the transport links in their area.

Top 3 comments made to the consultation related to:

1. The importance of a suitable service for pupils who do not have easy access to public transport in rural areas due to distance and the unsafe nature of many routes (44 comments)
2. The cost of transport (36 comments). However, only 13 comments indicated that there were personal concerns about meeting the cost should the subsidy be removed.
3. The perceived unfairness that transport for post 16 learners was not free at all given young people now have to remain in education (20 comments).

There were also a number of comments made which referred to the limitations of the support offered to learners by the current subsidised policy.

Responders also made a number of comments relating to how they felt the council could better consider the needs of learners attending school or college:

- Creating safer routes for cycling and walking
- Listening to what students want/need This applies equally to schools and colleges.
- Providing a suitable service for pupils from villages that do not have suitable public transport services running through them.
- Continue to pay for transport – particularly where a school is chosen in Year 7 because of the free transport provided and the young person wants to stay on at their post 16 provision.
- Providing more information to young people and parents via schools.

The highest number of comments were received when responders were asked to identify what alternatives they could have available to them should the council remove the financial subsidy.

The majority of responses related to the necessity for some children to have access to the school bus due to public transport not being a viable option – specific comments include:

- *“There is no public bus from our village to meet the school times. The journey is too difficult and dangerous to do by bike and whilst carrying all their school books etc. We have been reliant on the school bus.”*
- *“Not able to drive, there is no public transport to 6th form.”*
- *“Too far to walk and parents don’t drive.”*
- *“It would take over an hour to walk to school in the winter it would be dark.”*
- *“Our son relies on school transport ...we live in an area with very few buses so the proposed change would have a very negative impact on us.”*
- *“My daughter wants to attend her local 6th form There is no public transport and I work and am unable to take my daughter to school.”*
- *“I am disabled and unable to transport my children on a regular basis to school ... there is no other suitable public transport to take my children to school ... I would have to use the school bus service even as a chargeable service.*

The second most common responses related to dissatisfaction with the current policy for providing financial subsidy to a learners nearest post 16 provision; or comments made in circumstances which would not be supported with the current policy – specific comments include:

- *“My son is hoping to attend [a more distant college] which is not reachable by public transport … we can’t take him. It would be a shame if this subsidy prevented him from going there. He can do A levels and BTEC there which is not possible in [the local college].”*
- *“The pupils who choose to access their [post 16] education at [a more distant school] when they have spent the whole of their secondary education studying at the same school are being penalised by their postcode even though distance is not the determining factor of their need for transport.”*
- *“My child does not want to stay on at sixth form and after viewing all of the colleges in GloucestershireStroud has been chosen. It offer the best course but is miles away from our home. My child will have to get 2 buses in the morning and again in the afternoon. I am a single parent who is worried about how a cut in this funding will affect myself and many others.”*

With the cost of transport as the last common theme – specific comments include:

- *“My child’s bus fee is equivalent to one month’s salary and I am prepared to pay this.”*
- *“I would not be able to access education aside from buses, and if they are more expensive I would have no other option than to pay more, which my family would struggle with.”*
- *“The existing system is expensive even with the subsidy..... Living in a rural area several miles from the nearest school with no public transport means the student relies on the school bus system.”*
- *“My mother works and this is not close to my school and she is a single parent on benefits so financially it will not be easy for her to fund my bus fares.”*

Other options of learners using the train or a car (driven by themselves or others) to access post 16 education were also mentioned as possibilities should the financial subsidy be removed.

DISTRICT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Due to the demographics of Gloucestershire, and the scale of impact the policy will have across the whole county, the responses to the consultation were also analysed by district.

Cotswolds:

- 31% of responses were from this district (51% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners)
- The first consideration in this district was the ability to continue with previous travel arrangements with 64% preferring this.
- 25 responders indicated that they would have no alternative way of travelling if they cannot access the school contract bus.
- 14 responders mentioned that the cost of transport should be raised generally – 6 indicated they may require financial assistance with travel costs
- 8 responders referred to free transport due to the need to remain in education until 18.

Gloucester

- 20% of the responses were from this district (5% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners).
- This district was equally concerned about the ability to choose local services and continuing previous arrangements (both at 42%).
- Responders in this district made the most diverse comments; ranging from inequality between pre and post 16 transport and improved safety of school buses to other education providers offering better value for money for their own transport arrangements.
- 2 responders were dissatisfied with the current policy as it restricted learners to their nearest provider.

Forest of Dean

- 15% of responses were from this district (14% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners).
- The first consideration in this district were the ability to choose local services (32%), closely followed by the ability to continue previous arrangements (30%).
- 5 responders said that they would have no alternative way of travelling if they cannot use a school contract bus
- 6 responders indicated that some financial assistance with travel costs would be required

Stroud:

- 12% of responses were from this district (12% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners).
- The first consideration in this district was the ability to continue with previous travel arrangements with 50% preferring this.
- 6 responders said there was no alternative way of travelling if they cannot access the school contract bus.
- 1 responder raised concern that their son may not be able to continue at school without the subsidy.

Cheltenham

- 7% of responses were from this district (3% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners).
- The first consideration in this district was the ability to choose local services with 63% preferring this arrangement.
- 3 responders mentioned the need for safer routes for walking and cycling.
- 1 responder said the currently policy should provide assistance to a college that is not the nearest.
- 1 responder stated that they felt the limitations of the current policy were being compounded by the removal of the subsidy.

Tewkesbury

- 4% of responses were from this district (17% of all Post 16 transport assistance is provided for learners).
- The first consideration in this district was the ability to choose local services with 63% preferring this arrangement.
- 1 responder mentioned the need for suitable services for village with no public transport.
- 1 responder indicated an inability to pay for costly transport in a rural area.
- 1 responder stated that they felt the limitations of the current policy were being compounded by the removal of the subsidy.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS – EQUALITY & DIVERSITY DATA

Age	Count
Under 16	12
16-21	21
22-34	<5
35-54	60
55-64	10
65+	<5
Prefer not to say	9

Ethnicity	Count
White English	96
White Welsh	<5
White Irish	<5
Other white background	<5
White and Asian	<5
Other mixed background	<5

Disability	Count
Mobility	<5
Hearing	<5
Sight	<5
Using hands/fingers	<5
Mental health	<5

None of the respondents in the above categories indicated that their disability would impact on travel arrangements for a Post 16 learner

Religion	Count
Christian	54
No religion	43
Prefer not to say	16
Any other religion	<5
Prefer not to say	16
No response	<5