

Recently we held a consultation to seek views on the possible ending of the Sixth Form Transport Grant Scheme. The current scheme, which provides means-tested grants directly to school sixth form students, is at the authority's discretion. Legally the county council is not obliged to provide help with transport costs for over 16's.

As the consultation has now closed we would like to thank all the people who took the time to share their views with us and to let everyone know the outcome of the consultation.

About the consultation

The considerable financial pressures the county council is facing, both now and in the future, forced a review of the Transport Grant Scheme.

Added to these financial pressures, the grant scheme was funded from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the government agency which supports the delivery of training and education to all 16–19 year olds in England. The YPLA funding was withdrawn in August 2011.

However, the most vulnerable students may still be eligible for financial help. Further Education colleges, training providers and sixth forms will all get a share of the YPLA's new £180m bursary scheme for 16-19 year olds. This fund was established after the government withdrew the Education Maintenance Allowance.

The authority consulted with all interested parties from September 19-December 1 2011 about the proposal that the Transport Grant Scheme for school sixth formers be withdrawn with effect from September 2012.

About the changes

Following the consultation County Councillor Susie Charles, the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools, has approved the proposal to close the Transport Grant Scheme from September 2012 onwards. We have listened carefully to the views of those we have consulted and because of this we have made a change to the original proposal.

A large number of respondents to the consultation expressed concern about the impact of closing the scheme if a student is only halfway through their studies. We now recognise that the closure of the scheme may be detrimental to those students entering their second year of study in September 2012, as choices of further education may have been based on the availability of the transport grant.

In order to do our best to help these students, the initial proposal has been amended so that the scheme will be closed to **new** entrants in September 2012, whilst students who currently receive the grant will be eligible to reapply for it to support them in their final year.

If you would like more information on this, the full annual Transport Policy statement, detailing the transport arrangements available to ensure learners aged 16+ can access education or training, will be published on 31 May 2012 as specified in the Education Act 1996 Section 509(AA).

If you have any questions regarding the consultation, or need further information, please telephone the Transport Grant Team on 01772 530430.