

**POTENTIAL REQUESTS FOR FREE TRANSPORT FOR PUPILS FROM
LOWER INCOME FAMILIES**

1. New legislation states that free transport should be provided for pupils whose family is in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) or 'the maximum level of Working Tax Credit for their case' (max WTC), where the home is between two and six miles from school, to a choice of up to three secondary schools (from Sept. 2008). Free transport should be provided on the same basis for primary aged pupils living at least two miles from their local school from September 2007. Additionally, denominational pupils from lower income families will be able to receive free transport where the school is 2-15 miles away.
 - Information from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) states that 2,800 families in Wiltshire receive the maximum level of WTC for their case.
 - This translates into 4.8 per cent of the total population or 3,098 of Wiltshire's schools aged pupils (according to census 2001+ population growth figures).
 - Taking into account the proportion of primary and secondary aged pupils, this means 1,642 primary aged and 1,456 secondary aged pupils could qualify for free transport.
 - In addition to this, currently 4,052 pupils receive FSM and these could also qualify depending on which school they attend.

	SCHOOL	NUMBER OF PUPILS
Working Tax Credit (Maximum)	Primary	1,642
	Secondary	1,456
Free School Meals	Primary	2,346
	Secondary	1,706
TOTAL number of pupils who <u>could</u> qualify for additional transport assistance.		7,150

2. The above estimates are of the maximum numbers that could qualify. In practice the actual number who would be eligible under the distance and age criteria, and who would choose to take the opportunity, would probably be much lower. It will be necessary to do more work to develop the estimates further and to translate these into estimated costs. Although due to the complexity of the various factors and how they inter-relate, and the lack of reliable data on some of the key variables, these will inevitably be extremely speculative.
3. For **Primary Schools**, it is likely that only a relatively small proportion of the 3,988 potentially eligible children will be aged over eight and living between two and three miles from their designated school. However, all of these (assuming they have not chosen to attend a different school) would automatically be eligible for free transport with immediate effect from September 2007. However, as there are usually spare seats available on existing primary school transport and the number of newly eligible pupils at any one school will probably be small, it is likely that the additional cost will be small.

4. For **Secondary Schools**, the situation is more complex and the new eligibility criteria will impact in two ways:-
- (a) There will be those who qualify automatically for free transport to the school they already attend because they live between two and three miles away. The cost impact of this will be felt in September 2008 when the new eligibility criteria take effect. As existing secondary school transport generally has far fewer spare seats available than the primary transport, the cost impact is likely to be more significant. Some of these children already travel to school on public service buses, paying their own fare, and would in future be eligible to a free bus pass.
- (b) The most significant cost impact, and the one that is the most difficult to estimate, is for those who choose to attend a different (non-designated) school. There are a number of reasons for this:-
- While most secondary school pupils are likely to have a choice of at least two secondary schools within six miles, there will be some rural areas where this is not the case.
 - There may be some children in the main towns where the three nearest schools are all within the two miles walking distance and who would therefore not be eligible for transport.
 - It will be impossible to accurately estimate how many children will actually choose to attend an alternative school, and how the number who do choose will grow or fluctuate over time. This will depend on a range of unquantifiable factors such as reputation of the schools concerned, peer pressure and parental enthusiasm, which will vary from place to place and over time.
 - The cost implications are also more difficult to quantify, as although in some places it may be possible to extend existing transport arrangements, in many cases expensive new transport would need to be provided.

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