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**Clerks to Town and Parish Councils**

Dear Colleague

**Important Information: Suffolk School Travel Changes from September 2019**

Suffolk County Council is implementing changes to its School Travel Policy taking effect from September 2019. We have written to all schools with information about the policy change and how it will affect them.  For your reference please see below the detail of the policy change and how it may affect schools in your area.

**Statutory School Age School Travel Policy:**

Children living in Suffolk who will be starting at a new school in September 2019 will be eligible for SCC funded school travel when they are over 2 miles (under 8 years old) or 3 miles (over 8) walking distance from their nearest suitable school that would have had a place available for them. This would be whether or not an application was made for a place at that school. Full details about SCC funded school travel, including additional arrangements for low income families and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), can be found at **<https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/>**

The new policy is being phased in.  This means that children who receive Suffolk County Council (SCC) funded school travel in the 2018/2019 school year will continue to receive this whilst they continue to attend the same school unless they turn 8 years of age and live between 2 and 3 miles from their current school, or move house at which time eligibility would be reassessed.

In the first year of change to the new school travel policy this will impact on those starting or moving school with effect from September 2019.  We are unable to be specific about the impact, until we complete the normal admissions rounds for September 2019.   The national offer days for school places are 1 March 2019 for secondary/upper allocations and 16 April 2019 for Primary/middle allocations.

For those starting at secondary/upper schools in September 2019, parents will be informed if their child is eligible for SCC funded travel by 30 April 2019.  Information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child’s receiving school.  If parents do not hear from us by this date and believe their child is eligible for funded school travel, they should contact the Customer Service Team on 0345 606 6173 or email them at customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk.   For primary/middle schools for school year 2019/2020, parents will be informed by 14 May 2019 and need to contact us as soon as possible after this date if they think they might be eligible. Again, information about those who are eligible to SCC funded travel will be provided to the child’s receiving school.

Beyond September 2019, changes will continue to be implemented as each year group starts a new school or a family move to a new house.

**For transport in September 2019 and all future years families whose child/ren are eligible for SCC funded school travel will need to opt in to receive their transport.**

This important change means that **all** parents will have to opt-in **by 31 May** each year for school travel to be provided in the following school year as this will no longer be provided automatically.

This includes:

1.       Those currently eligible and who have SCC funded travel under the old policy arrangements because they will be in Year 1 to Year 6, or Year 8 to Year 11 in September 2019 (and have not moved address) or

2.       are eligible under the new travel policy.

Recent research has shown that some families, although eligible to SCC funded school travel, do not use their seat(s).  Suffolk County Council consequently is funding seats which are unused and therefore, we are asking families to opt in.

**Post-16 Travel Policy Statement for September 2019:**

The Post-16 Policy has not changed other than agreed increases to the cost of a seat until the charge equals the average cost.  For September 2019/2020 school year the charge will be £750 per annum, and for students with SEND £690 per annum.

**What town and parish councils can do to help:**

Town and Parish councils can assist as we are planning for September 2019.  From a family perspective, it would be helpful if all town and parish councils would:

1. display the Sustainable Modes of Travel (SMOT) poster which can be found at insert link is provided for you to print and display for families in your area, to enable them to get ready for September 2019;
2. remind parents in the town and parish newsletter that **all** parents with children eligible for funded travel need to **opt in** to receive or continue to receive transport **between 1 March and 31 May 2019.** A poster will be available on[**https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/**](https://www.suffolkonboard.com/school-travel/)that you could display on your town and parish noticeboards;
3. consider how the town and parish council can help to facilitate capacity building support to encourage sustainable travel to schools; for example you could:
	* help secure the use of car parks in your area so parents can park and stride to school – village hall, church, pub, if these are not already made available;
	* if you have public rights of way that might be regularly used within 3 miles of the school in your parish, check the signs are clearly in place and if your community has the responsibility for keeping them cut back, ensure this happens regularly so they are passable all year round;
	* encourage informal lift sharing by facilitating  an opportunity for parents in your community  to meet and grow their support networks:
	* consider if improvements to walking and cycling routes to school could be made and your role in securing funding to help make them happen;
	* work with your local school to help them update their School Travel Plan.
4. work together with other interested local stakeholders to highlight and capture demand of potential future public transport passengers, facilitate discussions to explore scope of financially viable transport routes and explore discussions with local volunteers that may be willing to drive for Community Transport Organisations.

**Suffolk Brokerage Service:**

If any school or local community would like to access capacity building support to assist in running travel arrangements themselves, please contact customer.services@suffolk.gov.uk.  For more information on how town and parish councils can get involved look at the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy at

[https://www.suffolkonboard.com/content/downloadstream/7701/30752/2018-09-12+SMOTs+FINAL+2018-2025.pdf](https://www.suffolkonboard.com/content/downloadstream/7701/30752/2018-09-12%2BSMOTs%2BFINAL%2B2018-2025.pdf)

Thank you for your support in ensuring we assist families to plan their travel sustainably to school and providing clear information for those children who are eligible for SCC funded school travel.

Yours sincerely



**Allan Cadzow**

**Corporate Director of Children and Young People Services**