

Statement from Sheffield City Council

A Council spokesperson said: "Following an in-depth consultation with all those who may be affected, as well as schools and colleges, today we approved plans to make changes to travel support which will affect some students in Sheffield aged over 16.

We remain committed to enabling young people to continue to access education and training but, unfortunately due to successive budget cuts from the Government, we have to look closely at all the discretionary services we provide. The Coalition Government abolished the Educational Maintenance Allowance for post 16 students, and introduced a Bursary scheme through Schools and Colleges with a much reduced budget. At this point, almost all local authorities stopped providing funds for transport expecting students to apply for a bursary instead. Here in Sheffield we continued to do so, these proposals bring us in line with other local authorities.

These changes mean that Post 16 students currently eligible for a zero-fare bus pass due to criteria on income are now encouraged instead to apply for and use the 16-19 Bursary, to fund their transport costs. This will affect around 150 students.

Also 200 families who have Post 16 young people with special educational needs or disabilities, who currently receive transport to post-16 education or training on a taxi or minibus for free, will be asked to contribute £540 per year (£10.38 per week) towards the total cost of this transport.

This contribution will go towards the total transport cost of an average of £4,000 and up to £12,000 for young people with high needs. Families who are eligible for the 16-19 Bursary will be encouraged to apply to the fund and use it to cover this contribution towards transport cost.

We are committed to ensuring that every child, regardless of their needs or their family's financial situation, can continue to access education and training. We are therefore setting up a Hardship Fund to mitigate the impact of these changes and are continuing to support our exemplary independent travel programme, 'Indie Travel'.