



7 May 2026

Dear Councillors,

We write on behalf of the parent carers of children and young people with SEND in Hertfordshire in our capacity as the Parent Carer Forum for Hertfordshire. This is our response to Hertfordshire County Council's consultation on proposed changes to post-16 home to school/college transport for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which we understand is to be discussed by the Education, SEND & Inclusion Cabinet Panel on 11th May 2026 and Cabinet on 13th May 2026.

Through discussion with our parent carer representatives and wider engagement with Hertfordshire families, we find there is significant anxiety about the potential impact on SEND families of Hertfordshire's proposal to use Personal Transport Budgets (PTB) as the default model for post-16 SEND transport. While we recognise that PTBs offer a flexible option for some families, many parents are deeply concerned about how these proposals will operate in practice. We also believe there is a real risk of unintended consequences for young people with SEND and their carers that have not been sufficiently addressed in the current proposal and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

We note the Guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) explains that “a **Local Authority must provide what provision it considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of 6th form age to receive education or training... and must consider the needs of those who could not access education or training provision if no arrangements were made.**”

A summary of the key concerns is as follows:

1. The default PTB approach could place the most vulnerable young people with SEND at risk of harm due to a “one size fits all” approach; some parent carers may not be able to navigate the two stage complaints / appeals process to enable their young people to receive the actual transport they need.
2. Herts County Council already holds extensive information about young people's needs in their EHCPs, and the process of having to go to appeal to secure home school transport puts an additional, unnecessary burden on families of young people with the most complex needs.
3. The proposals shift responsibility and risk onto families that are already under considerable pressure.
4. There is strong concern that PTBs may not reflect the actual cost of transport in Hertfordshire, particularly in rural areas.
5. We note that the flexibility of PTB works well for some families, but there are concerns regarding how well a system with PTB as the default option would work, based on feedback from parents who have used it and shared the practical challenges.
6. The most vulnerable families e.g. those without access to a car, without a driving licence, with disabled parents, single parents, and/or those on a low income will be disproportionately affected by the proposed changes.



7. Requiring parents to undertake multiple daily journeys may force them to reduce their working hours or leave employment altogether, especially where they have more than one child or young person with SEND. This has significant implications both for family stability and for the wider community.
8. The current travel training programme feels highly prescriptive, particularly for autistic young people or those with demand-avoidant profiles. Families are worried that they risk losing access to transport support if their young people with SEND cannot engage with the programme as it is currently delivered. There are also concerns about training clashing with important dates such as mock exams and other key assessment periods, which HPCI has raised and were told that change was now being considered.
9. The consultation process was not adequate for the following reasons:
 - a. The families who will be most impacted are those with younger children who will move into post-16 provision in the future. However, the consultation appeared to assume that respondents were already using the service, so it was difficult for the families who will be the most affected by the proposal to provide their feedback. In the EqIA, the Council states that in September 2025 there were 10,493 children aged between 5 and 15 with an EHCP. The consultation received only 1,660 responses in total from both parents and professionals.
 - b. The information in SEND News on 16th March 2026 suggested that the proposed changes would mainly affect families with young people aged 16-18. This has misrepresented the scope of the consultation as the system for those currently aged 16 to 18 will not change. Those who will be most affected by the proposal may not have realised its relevance to them.
 - c. The free webinar run by Jayne Abery and Sally Glossop on 19th March 2026 was first advertised in this issue of SEND News on 16th March. The webinar was at short notice and held in the middle of the day when a lot of people would have been at work. The only attendees at the webinar were three HPCI reps.
 - d. The consultation read more like a survey than a policy consultation document, which confused its purpose and scope and was not proportionate to the gravity of the impact of the proposals.
 - e. Some of the questions in the consultation were confusing, such as: "Should Hertfordshire County Council prioritise its resources, including for home to school travel, by focussing its support for those with the highest level of need and with no alternative options, by providing a Personal Travel Budget as the standard travel offer for 16-18s (young people of 6th form age)?"
 - f. Some of the questions were written using leading language. For respondents such as colleges or professionals they were only asked one question with a Yes/No answer and a space for a comment.

Further detail on the above concerns can be found in the attached response, sent to Tony Fitzpatrick and Hero Slinn, also cc'd to Jayne Abery, Peter Hosier and Tracey Noble at Herts County Council on 13th March 2026.

Having read through the papers that have been published ahead of the ESI Cabinet meeting and Full Cabinet, we have further concerns:

1. In the EqIA, the Council has recognised that a potential negative impact is cost, which could become a barrier to accessing learning and qualifications. The suggestions it has made to mitigate the cost are:



- a. Families with a young person at a special school in Hertfordshire apply for a spare seat on vehicles contracted to transport statutory aged pupils. If they get a seat, an unnamed charge will be levied. In the section of the EqIA for Disability, it states that this fee will be waived for families on a low income. In the section of the EqIA for Age, it says that families on a low income will pay a third of the charge. Better clarity is needed regarding the cost of these spare seats, and the discount that is being offered to families on a low income, before it can be decided whether this is an adequate mitigation of the cost of transport for SEND families.
 - b. Families on a low income or those with young people with higher levels of individual need can apply for Bursary Funding from their education provider to assist with travel expenses. This suggestion, as well as the one above, places further administrative burden and uncertainty on SEND families.
2. The EqIA states that there is no evidence to suggest that there is disproportionate impact related to carers. We would refute this statement, given the extra administrative pressure, responsibility and uncertainty this is going to place on the parent carers of children with SEND, as well as the difficulty this will pose for those who work. The Council should be giving consideration to mitigation for this protected characteristic.
 3. Despite 48% of responses to the consultation stating that they would not consider working with other families to share transport, and only 27% saying they would, the Council is investing money in a new App to support car sharing. The amount being invested does not appear to have been shared.
 4. The proposal states that if a young person's attendance drops below 95%, the next term's payment is adjusted accordingly. This will be challenging for families to budget for, will disproportionately affect those families with a young person whose disability causes them to have long periods of illness, and could add hardship on top of the stress of supporting a young person through serious illness.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this feedback. We would welcome ongoing dialogue with Herts County Council as decisions are taken forward.

Yours sincerely,

Leise Cooper, Chair

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Attached: Communication from HPCI to Herts County Council on 13th March 2026.