

Norfolk Sustainable School Travel Strategy

Executive Summary

Free school transport is provided by Norfolk County Council for 12% of the total school population (Reception to Year 11). It is provided for children and young people who are eligible according to the Council's [Home to School and College Transport Policy](#), which reflects [national legislation](#). For the remaining 88% of school children, it is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure their child(ren) attends school and to determine how they will make the journey to and from school.

[The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) placed a duty on Local Authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and to publish a Sustainable School Travel Strategy (SSTS). This should set out a vision, objectives and work programme for improving sustainable travel options, which will also provide a source of information to parent/carers about the travel options available to them when choosing a school for their child(ren).

This strategy describes how we will ensure that the journey to school and college promotes positive behaviours, supports healthy and active lifestyles and does not become a barrier to taking up education opportunities. It aims to address a range of issues including:

- Children and young people living within 2-3 miles of their school may not have an available walking route for them to use.
- A number of children do not attend their local or catchment school and transport availability is not considered by all parent/carers when making this choice.
- There are low levels of cycling to school, but there is potential to increase and promote it.
- There is a high incidence of children travelling to school by car, which can cause congestion and safety problems outside and in the vicinity of schools.
- Individual journeys where transport is not shared with other pupils/students but potentially could be.
- All schools previously had a travel plan, but it is believed many are no longer active and need refreshing.
- Reducing our carbon footprint for new and existing schools.

Norfolk's School Travel Vision

- To enable every child and young person to fulfil their educational potential by ensuring they're able to get to school or college in a **safe and sustainable** manner with ever increasing independence.

We will achieve this through:

- The provision of safe and accessible transport based on the needs of the child/ren, for school age children who live more than the statutory agreed distance from their nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school
- Provision of support to post 16 students
- The provision of infrastructure to enable children and their families to walk or cycle to school
- Strategic support to the local bus network, including working with bus operators to secure travel discounts for students
- Working with schools, colleges and communities to enhance safety for children travelling to school independently, by securing funding through the planning process to promote sustainable and healthy travel options
- Promoting safe travel to and from school through a range of initiatives that teaches safer travel practises to children and young people, but also aims to make sustainable travel fun.
- Leading on travel training strategies and courses
- Reducing carbon emissions for all new school builds and working with existing schools in lowering theirs e.g. electric charging points for staff, promoting walking/cycling etc
- Regular audits of NCC provided home to school transport for individual journeys to identify those that could move to shared transport
- Providing clear and relevant travel and transport information to parent/carers, schools and colleges

Our Priorities

Our priorities for the next three years are:

- To continue working with partners to create more walking and cycling routes available to school children
- Work with schools and colleges to promote take up of the cycle allowance
- To move students onto regular local bus and train services where this is appropriate rather than transporting them on dedicated school services
- To move children and young people from individual taxi transport to shared transport where appropriate
- To work with partners to reduce carbon emissions in schools
- To support schools to update their travel plans
- To enhance the travel and transport information for parent/carers, school and colleges

Introduction and context

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a duty on local Authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and to publish a Sustainable

School Travel Strategy (SSTS). This should set out a vision, objectives and work programme for improving accessibility to schools and colleges, which will provide a source of information to parent/carers about the travel options available to them.

Norfolk's overarching transport vision is set out in [Connecting Norfolk](#) – the county's Local Transport Plan. This is to achieve a transport system that allows residents and visitors a range of low carbon options to meet their transport needs and attracts and retains business investment in the county.

Our vision for school transport is to enable every child and young person to fulfil their educational potential by ensuring they're able to get to school or college in an **independent, safe and sustainable manner**.

Norfolk's ambition is for there to be, as a minimum a [good school for every Norfolk learner](#). This is because a child or young person in Norfolk is entitled to be educated in a school or college that is at least good, and we expect that our schools and colleges will be as good as and then better than other education establishments in any other part of England. We recognise that enabling children and young people to fulfil their educational potential is not just about how good the school or college is, but about their whole community, school and family environment that surrounds it. Their [journey to school or college](#) is part of this. There is also overriding evidence that children and young people who are active are better learners and therefore, an active journey to school or college will add to the children and young people's ability to learn and engage in their education.

Free transport is provided by Norfolk County Council for 12% of the total school population (Reception to Year 11). It is provided for children and young people who are eligible according to the [Councils policy](#), which reflects national legislation.

The general policy is to provide free school transport to children who are attending their nearest catchment or nearest appropriate school (Reception to Year 11) who live more than 2 miles away (if they are aged under 8) or more than 3 miles away if they are older. This currently costs the Council £28M per year (2021/2022) for mainstream students. The remaining 88% of school children make their own way to school with / without adult accompaniment. The costs to the council for home to school transport in 2021/2022 financial year are estimated to be £45M for reception to year 20.

This strategy sets how we will ensure that each child and young person's journey to school or college promotes positive behaviours, supports healthy active lifestyles and does not become a barrier to taking up educational opportunities. It dovetails with other strategies and projects including the:

- [Local Transport Plan](#)
- [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
- [Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)
- [Norfolk Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance \(Flourish\)](#)
- [Norwich Transforming Cities Fund](#)

This strategy replaces the previous version published in 2014.

Norfolk

Norfolk is largely a rural and non-metropolitan county in East Anglia and is the fifth largest ceremonial county in England with an area of 5,371 km² bordering Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, 40% of the population live in four major built up areas, Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Kings Lynn and Thetford.

In many of the rural areas there is no sixth form provision or colleges these are usually found in the city and larger towns.

1. Norfolk population demographics

In 2020 the population in Norfolk was 914,039, of this 11% (96,717) were school children and young people aged 5 to 19 (Ref Norfolk insight)

Graph from Norfolk Insight showing population of Norfolk in 2020:

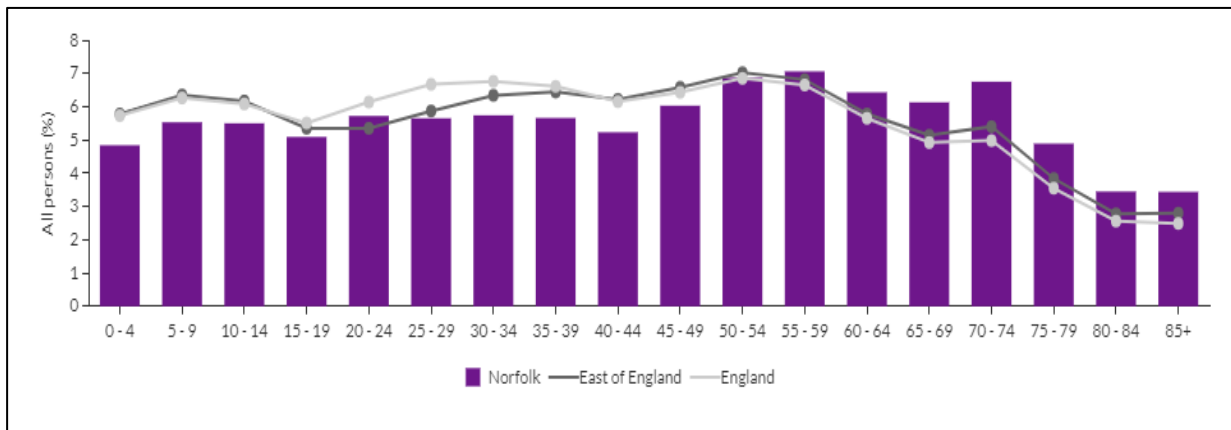


Table from Norfolk Insight showing population of Norfolk in 2020:

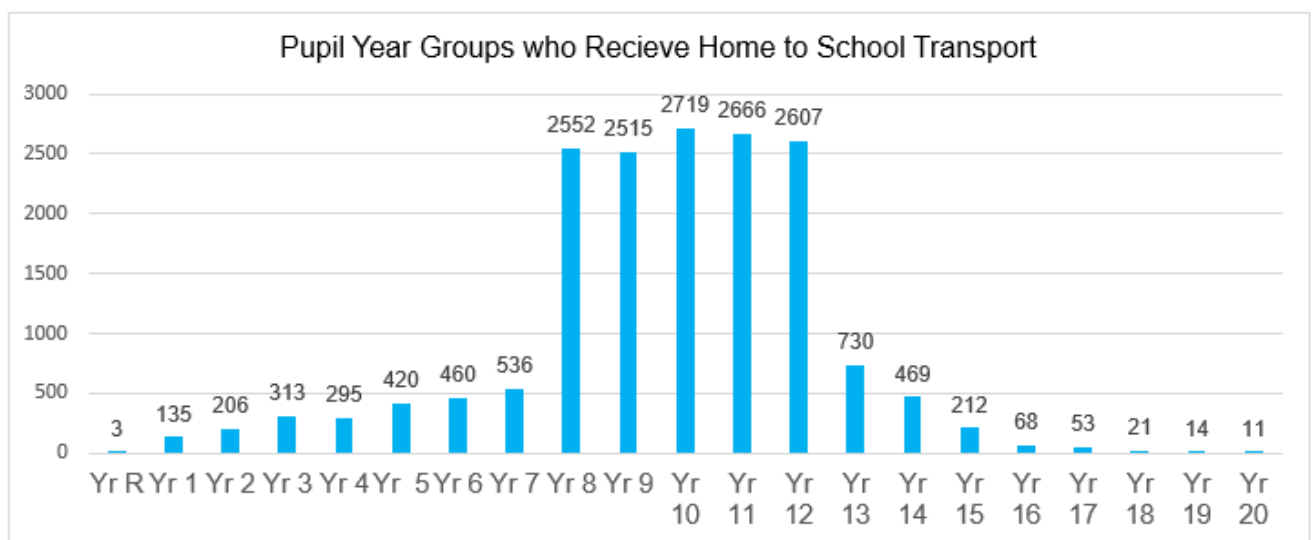
Age Range	Norfolk Count	Norfolk %	East of England Count	East of England %	England Count	England %
0 - 4	44201	4.8	362537	5.8	3239447	5.7
5 - 9	50546	5.5	397803	6.4	3539458	6.3
10 - 14	50238	5.5	386546	6.2	3435579	6.1
15 - 19	46479	5.1	335145	5.4	3115871	5.5
20 - 24	52291	5.7	335517	5.4	3472522	6.1
25 - 29	51675	5.7	368095	5.9	3771493	6.7
30 - 34	52487	5.7	397354	6.3	3824652	6.8
35 - 39	51779	5.7	403555	6.4	3738209	6.6
40 - 44	47813	5.2	389672	6.2	3476303	6.2
45 - 49	55154	6	412218	6.6	3638639	6.4
50 - 54	62764	6.9	440213	7	3875351	6.9
55 - 59	64513	7.1	426788	6.8	3761782	6.7
60 - 64	58756	6.4	362456	5.8	3196813	5.7
65 - 69	56053	6.1	321949	5.1	2784300	4.9

Age Range	Norfolk Count	Norfolk %	East of England Count	East of England %	England Count	England %
70 - 74	61729	6.8	338766	5.4	2814128	5
75 - 79	44654	4.9	240677	3.8	2009992	3.6
80 - 84	31494	3.5	174245	2.8	1449189	2.6
85+	31413	3.4	175625	2.8	1406410	2.5

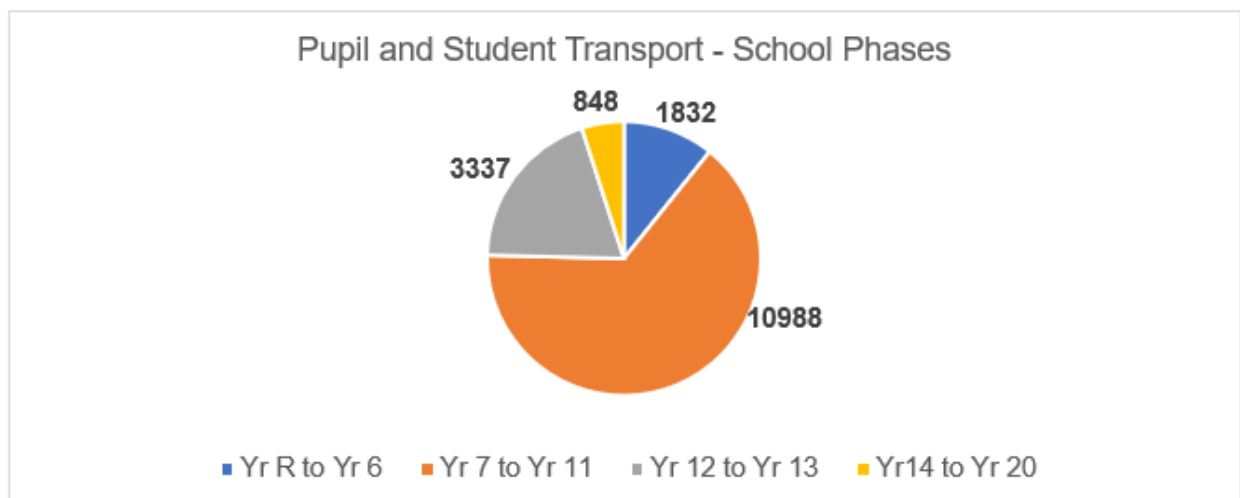
2. Norfolk Pupil Demographics:

In January 2022 currently there are 17,000 pupils / students who receive home to school transport to school or college.

Graph showing number of pupils and curriculum year group who receive Home to School Transport January 2022:



Graph showing number of pupils receiving Home to school transport Jan 2022:



The number of mainstream and SEN pupils/students receiving transport in January 2022 is 17,000 to 426 schools, education establishments and colleges within and outside of Norfolk.

Table showing number of pupils receiving home to school transport in school phase:

School Phase	Curriculum Year Groups	Number of pupils / students receiving transport
Primary, Infant and Junior	Reception to Year 6	1832
High School	Year 7 to Year 11	10988
Sixth form / College	Year 12 and 13	3337
College (students with EHCP)	Year 14 to Year 20	848

3. Provision of free transport to school age children

The County Council’s general policy for school travel is to provide free home to school transport for eligible children of statutory age (5 to 16 years) and eligible children aged 4 if they will be 5 before 31st August of that school year.

Free transport is provided for children of statutory school age who attend the nearest catchment school or nearest appropriate school for their age and education needs, provided they meet the distance and age criteria. The specific details are set out in our [Home to School and College Transport Policy](#).

We currently (January 2022) provide **free transport to** around 12800 children and young people who attend mainstream school (Reception to year 11). They travel on either dedicated school vehicles (78%) which may include bus, taxi or public bus and train services (22%)

Around 11% (1870) of children qualify for free transport because although they live within the statutory minimum distance of school there isn’t an available walking route for them to use.

A further 2.4% (40) children qualify for free transport due to their local catchment school being full.

Children and young people who do not qualify for free transport are required to travel to school/college independently or under the supervision of their parent/carers. A number of children and young people do not qualify because they attend a school of their parent/carer’s choice rather than their local or catchment school. Transport availability is not considered by all parent/carers when making this choice.

4. Support to students / pupils with SEND

For school aged children (reception to Year 11) who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) transport will be provided, subject to the distance criteria within

the [Home to School and College Transport Policy](#), to the school named within their plan as the nearest appropriate school that can meet their assessed needs.

Currently there are 8539 children and young people in Reception to Year 20 who have an EHCP and of those 39% (3299) receive home to school transport.

5. Support to Post 16 students

Transport is a key consideration for students aged 15-16 when choosing an establishment for further education. Our aim will be to ensure students fully understand the travel options available to them prior to making a decision. We understand that cost is an important factor and can be a barrier for some students which is why we currently provide a subsidised travel scheme for students aged 16-19 to travel on local bus, train or education specific services.

In some cases, [local bus and train operators](#) are able to offer greater discounts for students if they deal with them directly. We will encourage students to check this and provide information about operator travel discounts on our website. Any travel passes obtained from the operator are also likely to offer greater travel flexibility, enabling students to travel at times outside of their usual journey to school or college.

All schools with a sixth form, and further education colleges, are [accessible via a network of core transport routes](#), and other bus services linking with education establishments can be viewed using an interactive map on our website.

In 2022 we are reviewing our Home to School and College Transport Policy for Post 16 students.

6. Mode of travel to school

Patterns of school travel are complex with issues often unique to an individual school according to local circumstances, including location, catchment area, attractiveness of the school and demographics. Therefore, it is important to consider the need and patterns of each school on an individual level. Every school in Norfolk previously had a travel plan. These should be working documents developed and owned by the school aiming to reduce congestion at the school gates, encourage more sustainable forms of travel on the school journey, promote healthier lifestyles and enable the school to access funding for capital projects on school grounds. We will encourage and support schools to re-engage with their travel plan and remind them that there is a statutory requirement for schools that are expanding or undergoing development works to have one.

7. Individual Journeys

Individual journeys take place when a child or young person is unable to share the vehicle due to health and safety reasons or there is no one locally for them to share the transport with.

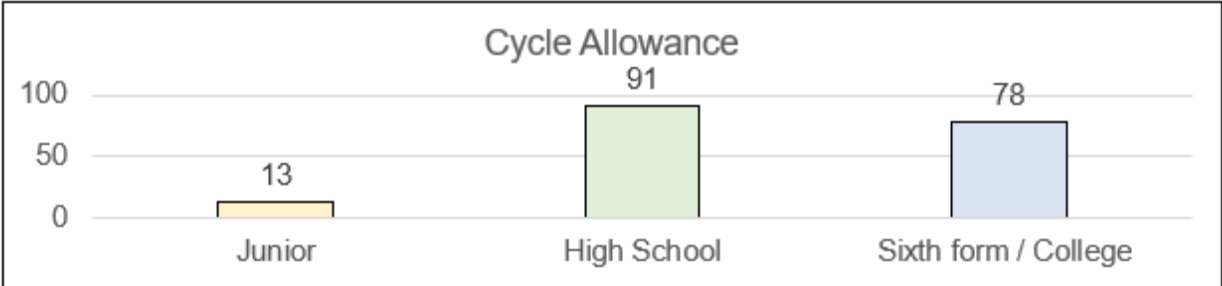
8. Walking, cycling or scooting to school

There are around 86 school crossing patrols in Norfolk that help children walking to school to cross the road safely. Most of these are on a direct route to a primary school. We use nationally recommended criteria for determining whether a school crossing patrol is warranted. We take into consideration the number of children crossing, the road layout and speed of the vehicles, traffic volumes and other safety measures, like signs and speed humps. In some cases, signage or other traffic calming measures are more appropriate for slowing traffic speeds and/or encouraging safer walking routes around schools.

The council supports cycling to school as a healthy and green alternative to motorised vehicle travel and a [cycling allowance of £200](#) per year is available for any pupil or student who is eligible and meets the criteria for travel assistance. We will promote this to students eligible for free school transport. In particular we will target secondary school students who live between 2 and 3.5 miles from school and where we know there are good cycle facilities in place and opportunity to remove dedicated school bus services.

We may work with schools and colleges to provide additional support for pupils and students who choose to do this. Studies show that encouraging students to cycle will provide both them and their families with health benefits – as children and young people are more likely to encourage their parent / carers to cycle too.

Graph showing number of pupils who receive cycle allowance in January 2022.



In January 2022 of the 17000 pupils who received Home to School Transport, 1.1% of pupils (187) received a cycle allowance.

9. Safeguarding

Ensuring children and young people are safe whilst traveling to school or college is a key priority. Our framework agreement for buying transport ensures that only operators who meet our minimum standards for safeguarding are used for school journeys, and all drivers and passenger assistants will have been checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service and complete an on-line safe-guarding training course. We have published a short safeguarding leaflet for transport drivers and passenger assistants, providing them with information on how to protect children and young people and spot someone who may be at risk. These are reviewed annually.

We take immediate action if safeguarding issues or inappropriate behaviour is detected on any school transport and will remove operators from school services should they breach our conditions.

We think it's important that parent/carers are fully aware of what they can expect from their child(ren)'s transport to school or college, so we will also develop and send a short leaflet to them. This will enable parent/carers to identify if transport operators or drivers are acting appropriately.

We know that parent/carers can become concerned if the school bus or transport is delayed and their child(ren) do not return home at the time expected. For children and young people who travel on a local bus service most of the operators have real time tracking available on their Apps.

CCTV is now in operation on many school and college transport vehicles, and we require drivers of children with special needs and all passenger assistants to have 'emergency aid' training. Passenger Assistants also complete 'How to be a Passenger Assistant'.

10. Behaviour whilst travelling to school

It is expected that all children and young people behave in an appropriate manner when travelling to and from school/college. The Department for Education expects each school to promote appropriate standards of behaviour on the school journey through rewarding positive behaviour and using sanctions to address poor behaviour, however it is also a key responsibility of parent/carers to ensure good behaviour. If appropriate, Headteachers can take action to address unacceptable behaviour even when this takes place outside the school premises and when pupils and students are not under the legal control of the school, including if this unacceptable behaviour happens on the journey to and from school.

Whilst on school transport we expect children and young people to comply with instructions from vehicle drivers or passenger assistants, particularly in the event of a breakdown or road incidence. Non-compliance with instructions will be regarded as unacceptable behaviour.

Any repeated unacceptable behaviour or single incident of dangerous behaviour may result in a temporary withdrawal of transport arrangements, for up to two months, during which time it will be the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their children access their place of learning.

11. Enhancing safety for children travelling to school

We want to ensure that all children and young people are safe when they travel to and from school or college whether this is on the school bus, walking or cycling. We know that safety can be a key concern for parent / carers, and in some cases a perceived lack of safety can be a barrier to children and young people travelling independently or choosing sustainable travel modes. [Our Public Health Road Safety](#)

[Community Coordinators](#) work with schools to promote safe parking outside the school and safe travel to and from school through a range of initiatives that teaches safer travel practises to children and young people, but also aim to make sustainable travel fun. At present this includes:

Primary:

- Safe Journey Ahead (Teacher Training)
- Step on It – Online pedestrian training
- Ride On it – Online cycle training
- Bikeability – Levels 1 and 2
- Bike, Walk, Scoot Club
- Safe School Run Pledge
- Active Travel Audit

Secondary:

- Over to you – Your choice TIE (Theatre in Education) tour performance
- SOI – Step on It pedestrian sessions
- FATAL 4 – Police led session
- Scooter Safety briefing
- The Honest Truth – For those interested in learning to drive

12. Travel Independence Training Across Norfolk (TITAN)

In addition, we will continue to deliver our [Travel Independence Training Across Norfolk \(TITAN\)](#) initiative which encourages young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to become confident independent travellers. The initiative specifically works with young people aged 10 (Year 6) to 25 both in school and the community, supporting effective transition to travelling independently.

TITAN travel independence training has shown to have positive effects on the lives of the young people trained as well as those around them. Successful travel training helps to:

- Develop life skills so young people can become more independent, increasing confidence and self-esteem
- Increase interaction with other young people of the same age, building import social skills
- Open up more opportunities, such as greater access to education, training, jobs, volunteering, leisure and social activities
- Build confidence about going to a new school or college
- Provide greater freedom so young people can be less reliant on their parents to take them places

13. Enhancing transport and travel information for SEND children and young people

Norfolk County Council SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) alongside the travel and transport team are working in co-production with parent/carers and education settings to enhance the travel and transport information given to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND.

In co-production a brief survey has been designed to ascertain wider views of parent/carers which will be launched in March 2022. The feedback from the survey will be used to better inform Norfolk County Council and education settings about the information needed to support positive travel experiences for children and young people with SEND.

14. Decarbonisation – net zero for new and existing schools

The Councils strategy is to build new schools wherever possible for large new communities and encouraging sustainable travel through provision of cycle and scooter parking.

We work with NCC Highways to consider how best to provide more than one pedestrian access wherever we can to allow pupils coming from different directions an easy route into school to encourage them to walk or cycle.

As part of the new NCC policy for new school buildings to reduce our carbon emissions and move towards carbon zero we will also be providing Electric Vehicle charging points increased PV panels and Air Source Heat Pumps rather than gas boilers.

With all schools we will also consider wider issues around changing behaviours and including this in the curriculum as a minimum.

15. Key issues to address

Based on the analysis above there are a number of key issues that have been identified that could be addressed with this strategy.

- Children living within 2-3 miles of their school may not have an available walking route for them to use
- Children who do not attend their local or catchment school. Transport availability is not considered by all parent/carers when making this choice.
- There are low levels of cycling to school but potential to increase this
- There is a high incidence of children travelling to school by car, which can cause congestion and safety problems outside and in the vicinity of schools
- All schools previously had a travel plan, but it is believed many are no longer active and need refreshing

- Pupils/students who travel in taxis who do not share the transport with others
- Reducing our carbon footprint for new and existing schools

16. Provision of infrastructure

Our priority is to provide sustainable travel options for people's regular journeys, including the journey to school and college. We will look to provide safe, accessible and well-maintained walking and cycling networks to encourage active travel on short journeys. We already have some 4,500km of footway and 113km of cycleway across the county, but it's important that these are linked together to create viable routes for people.

We currently provide free school transport to around 1870 children (January 2022) who live closer to their school than the eligible distance, but for whom a walking or cycling route has been assessed as being unavailable. This may be because the road is narrow, there is no verge to walk on or high levels of traffic. We will target investment to create or upgrade footways and cycleways ([Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)) so that we can provide more safe cycling and/or walking routes that are available for children when travelling to and from school.

Our annual Highways Capital Programme sets out how we will allocate funding for maintaining and improving transport infrastructure in Norfolk in accordance with our transport strategies and Transport Asset Management Plan. Improvements to walking and cycling routes that link with schools and college will be included in this programme of works.

17. Strategic support to the local bus network

The County Council plays a key role in enabling accessibility for residents and visitors by supporting the local bus network. We provide funding for over 130 bus services, publicise the network, and work with operators to influence service availability and make it easier for people to connect between different bus services.

Previous analysis showed that a significant number of children travel on local bus services, rather than school specific buses to get to school. This includes both primary and secondary age children but is especially common amongst college students – there are around 100 bus services going to further education establishments that are part of the local bus network. This provides a number of benefits – firstly it can offer students greater flexibility over when they travel and secondly it helps maintain accessibility for rural communities who otherwise may be without a bus service. Our strategy is to continue to move students onto regular local bus services where this is appropriate. Since 2014 it has increased from 18% to 22%.

Previously young people in Norfolk told us through the make your mark ballot that transport was a key concern for them. From work we have undertaken with the Norfolk Youth Parliament, the key things that matter to young people in relation to transport include:

- Price
- Flexibility of travel options
- Journey experience, e.g. Information on travel options, interaction with the driver

Following the 2022 NYP elections we will revisit this work and canvass young people about their current transport experiences.

We have worked with bus operators to address young people's key concerns and continue to do so.

As set out above we provide a subsidised travel scheme for Post 16 students to get to school or college, and the main bus operators provide up to a 30% discount on fares for young people aged 16-19.

NCC-provided ravel passes are Smartcards and are valid for one journey to school / college and one journey home each day during standard academic terms only. Pupils should present their Smartcard each time they board the vehicle, by placing it on the electronic ticket machine.

We will work with operators to ensure that 16-19 discounted fares are available.

18. Securing funding through the planning process

As the highway authority we have a role in planning as a statutory consultee, providing advice to the planning authority on all new development proposals. Where relevant and proportionate to the development we will aim to secure measures that will improve walking, cycling and public transport links to schools. As we are not able to influence when development comes forward, it is not possible to plan to make improvements through this process, however we will take opportunities when they arise. In particular we will look for opportunities to connect new developments to existing walking and cycling networks and complete missing links in existing infrastructure.

Statutory travel plans are required for larger new developments, including schools, residential and business development. These can be a useful tool for influencing people's travel habits as they provide targeted initiatives to encourage people to switch to more sustainable transport options. We will provide support and guidance to ensure these effectively promote walking, cycling and public transport options to school and college. We will provide clearer messages around the health benefits of active travel and tailoring messages to specific population groups.

We will influence developers to contribute towards area or community wide travel plans where significant development comes forward in a particular location.

Conclusion

Focus of this Sustainable School Travel Strategy is to ensure that the journey to school or college promotes positive behaviours, supports healthy and active lifestyles

and does not become a barrier to taking up educational opportunities. It does this by putting measures in place to enable all children and young people to get to school in a safe and sustainable way.

The strategy focuses on:

- Providing safe and accessible transport to eligible pupils
- Providing support to post 16 students
- Providing infrastructure to enable children and their families to walk or cycle to school
- Supporting the local bus network, including working with bus operators to secure travel discounts for students
- Working with schools and communities to enhance safety for children and young people travelling to school independently
- Securing funding through the planning process to promote sustainable and health travel options
- Reducing our carbon footprint for new and existing schools

We will work closely with schools/colleges, parent/carers, transport operators and other stakeholders to deliver the strategy and achieve priorities.

Performance will be monitored using key performance indicators and will be reported using regular reporting channels.

Date Reviewed: August 2022

Reviewed By: HTST Policy Officer

Date Approved: November 2022

Approved By: Individual Cabinet member

Date for Next Review: July 2024