**Changes to Fare-Paying Passenger and Denominational Scheme FAQ’s**

**Why have these changes been made?**

* The Council currently has an annual budget of £4.2m per annum for School Transport. The budget in the current financial year is projected to overspend by £500,000. The proposed increase to the fare-paying charge will help reduce this overspend.
* The charge has not increased since September 2012. The increase in charge will bring us in line with the prices set by neighbouring Local Authorities.
* Customer feedback has shown that direct debit is a popular method of payment: this spreads the cost over a number of months and, once in place, no further contact is required, unless there are a change of circumstances.

**What are the new charges?**

* £480 per child per academic year paid by direct debit or payment upfront by debit/credit card once an invoice has been issued by B&NES Council. A direct debit form is included with the application form. The mandate must be completed & signed in order to process your application.
* The full termly charge is payable regardless of the number of journeys required per week
* We will review the charge annually: any increases will be agreed through the Council’s budget setting process.
* An exemption of the charges will only be made for children from low income families i.e. those who are in receipt of a qualifying benefit. A full list of the qualifying benefits and the evidence required are listed on the application form.

**Are there any discounts?**

* All new applications for any pupil not previously travelling in 2016/2017 will incur the full charge of £480, regardless of siblings.
* Full termly payment will be required if a pupil is allocated a seat mid-term.
* Existing customers currently paying for travel during the 2016/17 academic year will retain the 50% discount for the second and third child, until those children complete the current phase of their education (either primary or secondary).

Example - for families with one child in a primary school and two children in a secondary school (all paying):

* If one of the pupils in secondary school no longer requires transport, a discount will still apply for one of the two remaining pupils.
* If the remaining secondary school pupil no longer requires transport prior to the primary school pupil finishing, the discount would no longer be applicable. The full charge would be applied to the remaining child.
* The discount will no longer apply when a pupil moves from primary to secondary school.
* If a child moves school, a discount will no longer be applicable.

**Pricing structure based on when you apply:**

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| **Term**  | **Fee (per child)** | **Application Deadline** |
| Term 1  | £480 | 30/06/17 |
| Term 2 | £400 | 06/10/17 |
| Term 3 | £320 | 08/12/17 |
| Term 4 | £240 | 26/01/18 |
| Term 5  | £160 | 16/03/18 |
| Term 6 | £ 80 | 11/05/18 |

**How do I apply?**

* Applications will be sent out automatically to any pupils that are eligible for denominational transport and starting in Year 7 or Reception from September 2017
	+ Complete the application form & direct debit mandate, then scan and email to passenger\_transport@bathnes.gov.uk
* For any other pupils in existing year groups, applications will be sent out automatically to any pupils that are eligible for denominational transport.
	+ Complete the application form & direct debit mandate, then scan and email to passenger\_transport@bathnes.gov.uk

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**When do I need to apply by?**

* Applications can be received throughout the year for consideration. The timing for allocation is at the discretion of the allocating Transport Officer: this could take up to 4 weeks.
* If you are not entitled to offer a seat, we will destroy the direct debit mandate - no payment will be requested from your bank. If a seat is offered you will receive an invoice either by post or email
* If you wish to pay the full yearly amount upfront, then tick “yes” on the application form

**What if I’m not entitled to Denominational transport?**

* Children not entitled to denominational transport to school may be able to travel on a paying basis under Bath & North East Somerset Council’s Fare-Paying Passenger Scheme. Families are able to apply for any spare seats available on hired vehicles arranged for entitled passengers.

**When do I pay?**

If you wish to pay the full yearly amount upfront, then tick “yes” on the application form. You will receive an invoice either by post or email. Information on how to make payment will be on the invoice.

If paying by direct debit we will automatically make the request for payment to your bank for 8 monthly instalments, starting 5th October and thereafter on the 5th of each month. **Failure to pay will result in the right to travel being withdrawn.**

If you do not have a bank account that supports direct debit please contact Passenger Transport.

**What if a direct debit payment fails during a given month?**

Any failed payment must be paid as soon as you are aware, as this will affect your right to the seat. Missed payments can be made using your invoice number.

**What if I change my bank account?**

Your new bank should transfer this direct debit to your new account and will notify us of the changes

**What if I no longer want my seat?**

Contact passenger\_transport@bathnes.gov.uk to advise an end date.

If a refund is due you will only be refunded for the remaining full-terms. If you cancel transport mid-term, any payment made for the current term will not be refunded. You should also cancel the direct debit with your bank.

**How to contact the Council about these changes:**

You can comment on these changes using the Council’s feedback form via the B&NES website.

The Council has followed the democratic process in order to make these changes, however, if you wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Ombudsman using this link: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint>