

School and Post-16 Transport Policies

The County Council runs two transport services for children and young people accessing school, further education or training. The School Transport service is required by law to provide free transport to children aged between five and 16 years who meet national eligibility criteria. The authority also operates a chargeable Post-16 service which is provided in certain circumstances to young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This is not legally required so is offered on a discretionary basis, recognising that young people with SEND often need to travel further to access the most suitable placements and may sometimes need extra support with this.



The County Council is proposing to withdraw the formal offer of a Spare Capacity Seats Scheme in its School Transport Policy. This is a discretionary scheme which allows spare seats on contracted vehicles to be offered on a temporary, chargeable basis to children who are not eligible for free School Transport. Unfortunately, the current offer of a Spare Capacity Seats Scheme creates an expectation that spare seats can be provided. However, this cannot be fulfilled if the available seats on a given vehicle are all in use by eligible children. Even once allocated, spare seats may later be withdrawn if needed for an eligible child, or if the number of spare seats reduces due to an operational change. There is therefore a lack of clarity for parents on whether spare seats can be made available.

The County Council will also seek to further maximise the use of vehicles to prioritise eligible children, making the future availability of spare seats even less likely. Additionally, the administration associated with the scheme is significant and far outweighs the small number of students who benefit from it, with just 66 spare seats in use as of June 2025. Visit the County Council's website for more information about the proposed consultations on the School Transport - and Post-16 Transport Policies - <https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s139252/Final%20Report%20-%20Permission%20to%20Consult%20on%20Proposed%20Changes%20to%20School%20Transport%20Policy%20D> -

Make a Splash

Swimming is set to become more accessible across Hampshire, thanks to a £100,000 funding boost approved by Hampshire County Council. The investment will support more local swimming pools to gain Swim England's Water Wellbeing accreditation, which is designed to make swimming more inclusive. This will open up access to swimming and other pool-based exercise activities for people who may currently face barriers - particularly those living with long-term health conditions, older adults, and individuals who are inactive or new to physical activity.

The grant will be managed by Energise Me - <https://www.energiseme.org/>, which will support pool providers to identify the needs within the local community and use funding accordingly. This may include staff training to develop the skills and confidence to deliver water-based exercise and/or the purchase of equipment to enable the delivery of personalised programmes.



Currently, 11 of Hampshire's 34 pools are accredited under Swim England's Water Wellbeing scheme. This new investment aims to significantly increase that number, helping more residents access safe, inclusive physical activity.

With over 22 per cent of adults in Hampshire currently inactive, and fewer than half of children meeting recommended physical activity levels, the Water Wellbeing project is a vital step towards building a healthier, more active community.

Facing Barriers to Employment

Hampshire County Council has unveiled plans to help more residents across the county into meaningful, sustainable work, especially those who have faced barriers such as long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, or lack of qualifications. The Get Hampshire Working Plan -

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/strategiesplansandpolicies/get-hampshire-working-plan> - brings together local employers, health services, education and training providers, local authorities, housing associations and community organisations to tackle the root causes of unemployment and economic inactivity, and connect employment, health and skills support, based on local needs. The Plan, produced in response to the Government's 'Get Britain Working' white paper, which sets out proposals to reform employment, health and skills support to tackle economic inactivity and support people into good work, addresses three urgent labour market challenges locally:

- supporting people facing barriers to employment including women, residents impacted by ill-health and disabilities, and older workers.
- youth employment – helping young people to thrive at the start of their careers, through better careers support, work experience opportunities, and skills training.
- insecure and low-quality work – working with employers to create inclusive recruitment practices and match local talent to local, sustainable work opportunities.



Participants will receive up to 12 months of personalised supported employment from Employment Specialists, including support with job searching, confidence building, and tailored employer engagement. The programme is voluntary and uses a well-established model for helping people into work, connecting work, health and skills in a joined-up way. Connect to Work is expected to support around 5,000 Hampshire residents over the next five years, helping them find and stay in good jobs that match their needs and aspirations.

Detailed information on the Programme will be published in the coming weeks. More information on the variety of employment support currently available can be found on the County Council's website at: - <https://www.hants.gov.uk/business/skillsbootcamp/employersupport>

Public Health

Across Hampshire, more children are overweight and obese between starting (Reception) and leaving (Year 6) primary school. Just over one in five Hampshire children are overweight and obese when they start primary school, and this rises to over one in three by the time they leave primary school. We also know that obesity and being overweight disproportionately affects children living in deprived areas and different minority ethnic groups.

Fast food outlets near schools impact children's food consumption as they make their way to and from home. The availability of less healthy foods in mainstream supermarkets, education and leisure environments, as well as restaurants and takeaways, contribute to an 'obesogenic' environment. In more deprived areas there is reduced access to healthier food retail options, and often a greater density of hot food takeaways. The increasing availability of home delivery services also adds to the provision of cheaper and faster meals to our doorstep, making it easier to consume less healthy foods. This impacts the ability of children, young people and families to make healthy food choices. We need to build on national research which suggests there is public support for restricting the number of takeaway shops within 400m of a primary school in our localities.

Children who are overweight or obese are more likely to experience other associated physical health conditions, for example breathing difficulties, bone and joint problems, insulin resistance, high blood pressure and dental decay. Only 48% of children achieve 60 minutes of physical activity a day.

Studies show that obese children and young people are five times more likely to be obese in adulthood than those who were not obese as children. This brings with it significant increased risks for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers, reducing the number of years people live in good health. The cost to public services is significant, particularly the health service. **The annual cost of obesity in Hampshire is around £540 million annually**, with a wider cost to society, through loss of work productivity and social care needs.

Councillor Surgery

There is a Councillor Surgery on the first Saturday of every month, 10.00 am – 12 noon in The Heath Room, All Saints Church, Denmead. No appointment necessary.

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