

## Loving homes needed in Hampshire

A new campaign [<https://www.hants.gov.uk/uasc>] from the County Council's Fostering Service shares the life changing stories of children who have fled to the UK in search of safety, and the incredible foster carers who have welcomed them into their homes. It seeks to inspire more prospective carers to come forward and follows an initial campaign launched last summer highlighting the need for more loving, stable homes for these children in Hampshire.



The only requirement is a spare room – and of course, plenty of patience, resilience, open-mindedness and positivity. There are many different types of arrangements available, from full-time fostering to more flexible options that fit around home and work-life commitments. Visit the Hampshire County Council Fostering Service website to find out more about fostering a child seeking refuge [<https://www.hants.gov.uk/uasc>], forthcoming events and for more information about the extensive training and support visit

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/fostering/trainingandsupportavailableforfoster-carers>.

## More than 5,000 new School Places for Hampshire

A proposed major investment of £242 million could create 5,312 extra school places in Hampshire by September 2027. Hampshire County Council has set out its proposed capital projects for Children's Services over the next three years, which include

- eight new schools and
- two new special schools,
- two school expansions, and
- seven projects to increase provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in existing schools.

In total, proposed new schools and expansions represent £199 million of the overall £242 million three-year programme. The additional resulting school places would contribute to a total of 19,989 new school places since 2013.

Places for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) remain a key focus of the capital programme, with two new proposed special schools in the pipeline including one in Whiteley which, subject to final approval, would be funded by Government following the County Council's successful bid to the Department for Education (DfE). Additionally, over £6 million has been earmarked for proposed projects to expand SEND provision at seven existing schools by September 2024.

Other projects to be funded by the capital programme, subject to approval, include access improvements in schools and other modernisations across existing buildings, as well as projects for children's social care and early years settings.

## Green light for changes to School and Post-16 Transport Policies

Changes designed to make Hampshire County Council's School Transport Policy more flexible and responsive to individual children's needs have been given the seal of approval. The changes are not part of a savings programme, and do not include any changes to the eligibility criteria for the service.

One of the key proposals agreed is the introduction of Personal Transport Budgets which could give greater choice to families with children whose needs cannot be met effectively in the local transport market. In these circumstances, the provision of a Personal Transport Budget could enable families to create more tailored transport arrangements better suited to their children's needs.

The provision of Passenger Assistants (PAs), who accompany eligible children with additional needs on their school journeys, will now also be reviewed regularly to ensure the right support continues to be in the right place. This could benefit those children currently without a PA whose needs have now increased; and likewise, those with a PA who have become more independent and no longer require this additional level of support.

As with most Local Authorities, the Post-16 Transport service requires a partial financial contribution from parents with the majority of the costs funded by the County Council. This contribution does not apply to families on low incomes or in exceptional circumstances and, in 2022/23, was waived for 76.7 per cent of families eligible for Post-16 Transport.

The agreed increase in the parental contribution for Post-16 Transport will be applied annually, in line with inflation, from September 2024. It will also apply to other discretionary transport services for school age children such as Spare Capacity seating, which enables families with children who are not eligible for funded, statutory transport to pay for spare seats on transport contracted by the County Council where they are available. Again, this change is not part of a savings programme and there are no changes to the eligibility criteria for the Post-16 Transport service.

The increase in the parental contribution towards discretionary transport comes in response to significant ongoing pressures which have seen the County Council's costs for School Transport and Post-16 Transport rise from £34 million in 2021/22, to over £50 million in 2022/23. These spiralling costs are being driven by inflation and exceptionally high demand, with 13,500 children and young people travelling on services every day, and further compounded by challenges in the current transport market, including driver shortages and a lack of transport operators. These pressures are entirely in line with those faced by Local Authorities nationally.

The approved changes to the School Transport and Post-16 Transport Policies also include some smaller revisions to policy wording to reflect the latest Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance. The policy changes follow two consultations which ran from Monday, 30th October to Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> December last year. The updated policies came into effect in February 2024, while the increase in the parental contribution towards discretionary transport services will apply from September 2024. Visit the County Council's website for full details of the changes to the School Transport Policy -

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s116010/Decision%20Report%20-%20Proposed%20Changes%20to%20the%20School%20Transport%20Policy.pdf>

and Post-16 Transport Policy -

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s116011/Decision%20Report%20-%20Determination%20of%20Post%2016%20Transport%20Policy%202024.pdf>

## **Household Waste Recycling Centre [HWRC] Proposals**

Hampshire County Council are encouraging residents to give their views on the Future Services Consultation, including proposals on Household Waste Recycling Centres. The consultation sets out 13 cost reduction proposals which could help towards closing a £132m budget shortfall we expect by April 2025. Like many councils nationally, Hampshire County Council is also facing huge budget pressures in future as costs go up and more people need local services - particularly social care to protect children at risk of harm or abuse, supporting more older people and children and adults with disabilities and additional needs.

The consultation sets out a range of savings options from the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) budget. No final decisions have been made, and it is important that we now hear as many views as possible on these options, which could include the closure of the smallest, most expensive-to-run HWRCs. We have considered evidence on fly-tipping when developing these proposals and it's the case that most of this illegally discarded waste is left by unscrupulous traders undertaking unlicensed house clearances.

The total number of reported incidents of fly-tipping – a criminal act - on public land across Hampshire, has disappointingly risen, this has been by less than 1%; and it's important to note that the amount of fly-tipped material has reduced by almost 400 tonnes – which is a drop of around 12.5%. Plus, the data shows that some of these fly-tips will also have been reported multiple times – counting towards the total incident figures. There has been no evidence of increased fly-tipping in other parts of the country that have closed household waste disposal sites and made other service changes, suggesting that the law-abiding majority of residents is continuing to do the right thing for the environment, even if this means making some adjustments.

To ensure we can provide HWRCs that continue to meet people's needs and make the most of public money, please have your say and take part in the public consultation which is open until to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Visit [www.hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation](http://www.hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation).

Patricia Stallard

Chairman  
Hampshire County Council  
Division: Winchester Southern Parishes  
[Denmead, Newlands, Boarhunt, Southwick, Knowle, Wickham, Soberton, Newtown]