

Dorset Parent-Carer Council



Making Positive Change for Children and Young People with Disabilities

Tuesday 4th December 2018

Dear Chair

I am writing on behalf of the Dorset Parent-Carer Council, (DPCC). We are your local Parent Carer Forum and a member of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums.

DPCC are responding to the cabinet paper, "Amendment of the SEND Transport Policy" that is to be discussed at the cabinet meeting on Wednesday 5th December 2018, Agenda Item 6.

As the paper recognises, this is a very considerable change in practice and service, affecting some of the most vulnerable children and young people across Dorset, even though it is technically permissible under a strict reading of the existing policy.

Our concern would be that this considerable change is not something identified as an outcome from the work done by Dorset County Council, iMpower and DPCC which has been shared with parent carers across Dorset. Indeed, the first that DPCC, parents and stakeholders heard of this proposal was as a result of the newspaper article in the Dorset Echo on Friday, 30th November 2018.

The paper refers at item 5 to timing, stating that "subject to consultation new applications will be processed under strict application of the existing policy wording from 1st January 2019". We fail to see how any meaningful consultation can be achieved for this to go ahead on 1st January. Furthermore, if this is to be introduced as a policy for new applications from 1st Jan, without consultation, it is difficult to see how any subsequent consultation process ahead of September as proposed for this to be applied to all existing users, can be genuine, as the policy will already be in operation.

The general principles of consultation have been established in court by caselaw: consultation must be proportionate and fair.

In particular, consultation must occur when proposals are still being developed.

Stakeholders must be given enough reasons for the proposals to allow them to make informed response.

Stakeholders must have adequate time to consider and respond to the proposals.

The outcome of the consultation should be taken into account.

Parents, carers, children & young people with SEND along with other stakeholders must have genuine opportunity to provide constructive comment on the proposals. DPCC think this is a reasonable expectation under the Dorset County Councils *SEND Participation and Co-Production Vision* as articulated in the DCC draft policy which was co-produced with parents and carers.

Lesley Mellor – Chairperson

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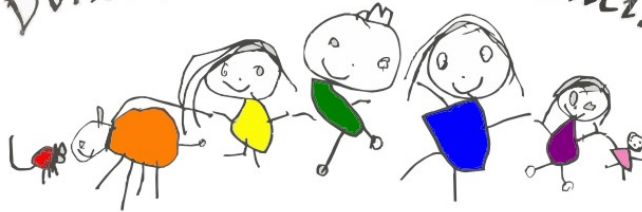


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We ask members of the committee/cabinet to be reasonable in their decision making and vote against this proposal on Wednesday. We ask that you work to ensure that there is not only fair and proportionate consultation but also that the council work with DPCC, parents, carers, children and young people with SEND and other stakeholders to find better solutions for saving money that avoid increasing the levels of anxiety to parents who are already struggling on a daily basis to get their children to school.

Yours Sincerely

Lesley Mellor & Elaine Okopski

On behalf of Dorset Parent-Carer Council

Lesley Mellor – Chairperson

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