

**DEPUTY SECRETARY**  
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To: All School Principals

21 March 2019

Dear Principal

## **REVIEW OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT**

Tommy O'Reilly wrote to you on 30 November 2018 to advise you that the Department was commencing a review of the current home to school transport policy. I am writing to update you on the progress of this Review.

The Review formally launched on 3 December 2018 with a period of engagement with all interested stakeholders, to start a conversation about whether the current home to school transport policy needs to be changed and, if so, to identify the options that should be considered. To allow as many stakeholders to contribute to this process as possible a number of different engagement approaches have been adopted. These include:

- an online questionnaire on the Department's website;
- public engagement events;
- facilitated focus groups with parents and with children & young people; and
- engagement with organisational stakeholders including local councils, unions and political representatives.

In addition to the public engagement, we have been liaising with colleagues in other government departments to identify the contribution home to school transport could have on a range of draft Programme for Government outcomes. For example, the impact on air pollution, the use of public transport and traffic congestion.

The purpose of this stage of the Review is therefore to gain an improved understanding of what stakeholders consider is positive about the current home to school transport policy and also how it could be improved and made more sustainable over the long term. In order to allow a future Education Minister to consider a wide range of policy options, the engagement with stakeholders has discussed options that would reduce the overall expenditure on home to school transport as well as potential for expansion of the provision of home to school transport. This latter option would be on the basis of the wider benefits that such an expansion could bring both in terms of supporting pupils' education but also the wider societal benefits within the draft Programme for Government that I refer to above. No options have been finalised and no decisions have been taken on the future nature of the policy.

We are very pleased that there has been a good uptake so far of the online questionnaire, with almost 5,000 responses. The questionnaire will remain open until 31 March 2019. In addition to the opportunity for Principals to complete the online questionnaire and attend one of the public engagement events, further opportunities will be available as a range of potential policy options emerge. At a later point, this would include a full public consultation process.

The Department will keep you updated as the Review progresses. In the meantime, I would encourage you to complete the online questionnaire if you haven't already done so at the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/X5KRQYT>.

Yours sincerely



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**HEAD OF EDUCATION POLICY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES**