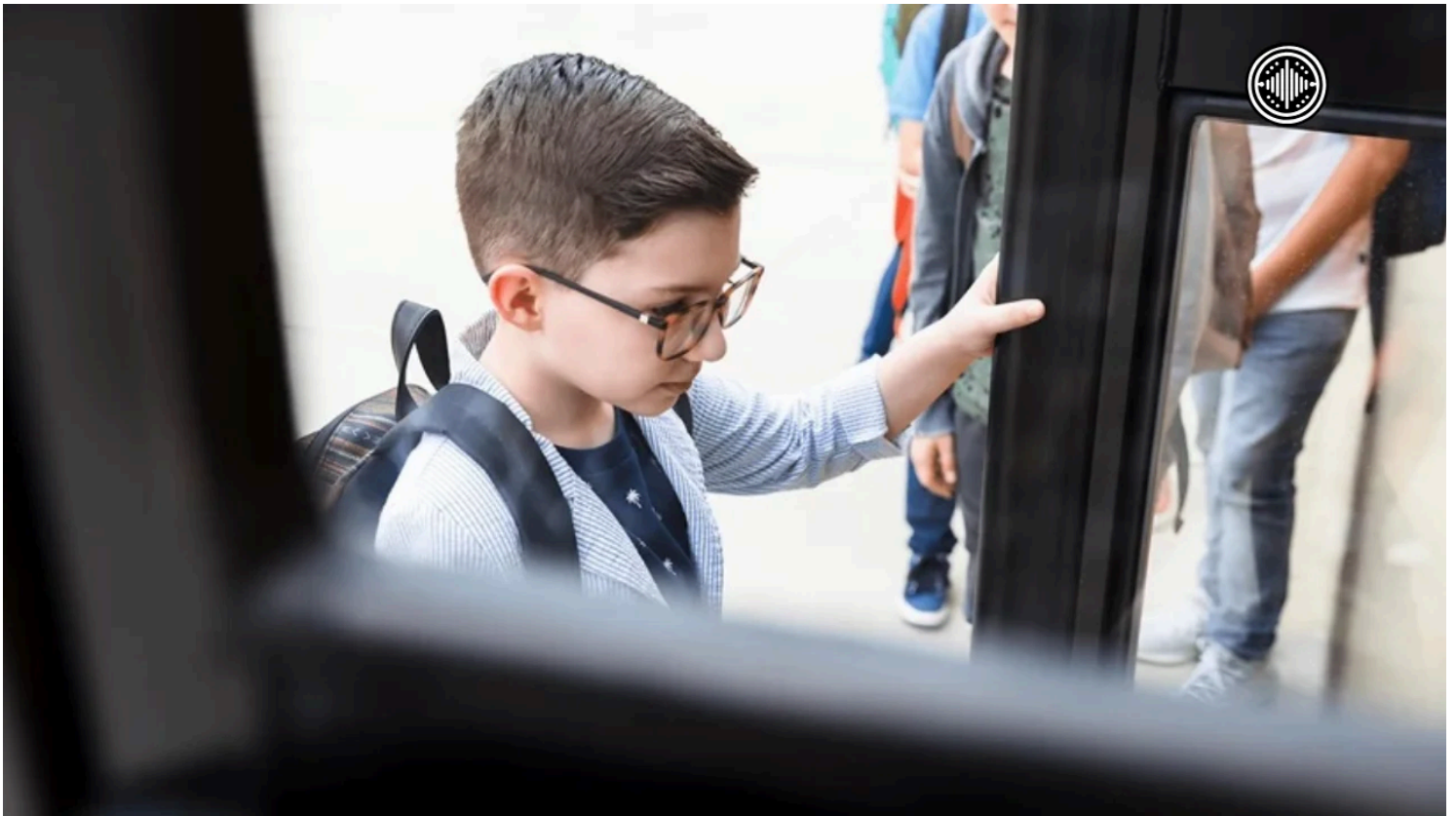


School Taxi Costs Soar Past £6 Million as Councils Struggle to Meet Rising Demand

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— Categories: Human Rights



A local council's school transport costs have surged past £6 million, raising concerns over the rising burden of taxi services used to shuttle children to and from school. The increase reflects growing demand for specialized transport for students with additional needs, as well as wider pressures on public services coping with inflation and staffing shortages. Council officials say the costs are necessary to ensure all children,

regardless of circumstance or disability, can access education safely and consistently.

The latest figures, released in a council budget update, show that the authority spent more than £6 million on school taxis in the last financial year, an increase of nearly £1 million compared to the previous year. A large portion of this spending is allocated to transporting children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), many of whom require tailored journeys due to medical or behavioral conditions, limited public transport options, or long distances from suitable schools.

While parents and advocacy groups recognize the importance of this service, the rising cost has sparked debate over whether the system is sustainable in its current form. Some local leaders have called for a review of transport contracts and a shift toward more efficient planning, including shared transport where appropriate and greater use of in-house vehicles. Others caution that cost-cutting must not come at the expense of children's safety or well-being.

The council has acknowledged the financial challenge but emphasized that statutory obligations mean it must continue to provide free transport for eligible pupils. Officials pointed out that in many cases, hiring taxis remains the most practical and safest solution, especially in rural areas or where public transport is not viable.

With education budgets already stretched and more families seeking support for SEND provision, the issue of school transport is becoming a flashpoint in local government finance. The council said it will continue working closely with families and schools to balance individual needs with long-term affordability. As demand grows, the debate underscores

the complexity of delivering inclusive education in an era of tightening public resources.