



CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	SEND Transport Update
CMT Lead:	Isobel Cattermole
Report Author and contact details:	Caroline Penfold Head of CAD Service, 01708 431743
Policy context:	The Education Act 1996 and LB Havering SEND Transport Policy.

SUMMARY

This report summarises the key issues in respect of the provision of Transport for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It provides detail on the current levels of spend, increasing pressures and actions that are underway to vary the offer and meet demand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the progress to date in addressing issues in the Havering SEND Transport Offer and future intended actions. Members are asked to note the content of the report.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Background and Policy Context

The Education Act 1996, requires Local Authorities to make suitable and free travel arrangements for 'eligible children' as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school. The School and Post 16 Travel Assistance policy sets out the arrangements the Council will make in order to meet its statutory duty and, in addition, covers students from the ages of 16-25 with special educational needs who may also be entitled to assistance.

A “refreshed” School and Post 16 Travel Assistance policy has been approved by the Assistant Director of Learning and Achievement and the Cabinet member for Learning and Achievement this year, which complies with the Education Act 1996 and its amendments in the Education and Inspections Act, 2006. It also follows the associated statutory guidance provided by the Department for Education. This School and Post 16 Travel Assistance policy has not had significant changes therefore a formal consultation was required.

All pupils up to the age of 16 (or 18 if they remain in full-time education) are currently entitled to free transport on buses within London. Havering Council considers this sufficient to meet the transport needs of the majority of children and young people under the age of 18.

Our Travel Assistance Policy is underpinned by the following general principles:

- It is the parents’ responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly but the Council will provide assistance in getting to school for those eligible for help under the policy.
- Students who are able to travel independently or use public transport will always be encouraged to do so in the first instance, and supported to achieve this if necessary.
- Students should be actively encouraged to travel independently and where possible learn the skills to do so. This is to maximise their future independence leading to greater opportunities in the areas of social interaction and employment.
- Students who have specific travel needs will be offered the most independent and personally enabling option for their situation.
- The Council will ensure that transport for eligible children is arranged when needed, after other potential options have been explored. Care will be taken to ensure that assistance is provided in the least restrictive way possible.
- The travel needs of individuals will be reviewed regularly and at least on a yearly basis to ensure that the arrangements are still appropriate for their assessed needs.
- Where additional transport is provided by the Council, the most cost-effective mode of transport that meets the individual’s needs **will** always be used.
- The use of existing provision such as free travel on public buses in London will be encouraged wherever possible.

2. Budget & Demand

402 young people were provided with travel assistance in the 2015/16 academic year, of which 327 are on buses and 75 pupils are in taxis. The Passenger Travel

Service operates 34 buses on a daily basis. The budget for 2016/17 comprises of £2,112,240 for Home To School Transport and £160,540 for Post 16 Transport. This is a total of £2.27m. This is therefore a significant investment of funding provided by Members for this purpose.

Analysis of the financial trend over the last three years has been outlined in Table 1. It is therefore evident that despite the budget being increased each financial year the demand for travel assistance has also increased, resulting in the budget being overspent.

Table 1. Financial trend Pre and Post 16

Pre 16	Budget	Actual spent	Overspend	%
2015/16	£1,857,320	£2,018,859	£161,539	+8.00%
2014/15	£1,797,980	£1,867,755	£69,775	+3.74%
2013/14	£1,216,900	£1,782,422	£565,522	+31.73%

Post 16	Budget	Actual spent	Overspend	%
2015/16	£185,690	£360,666	£174,976	+48.51%
2014/15	£154,020	£110,035	£16,015	+9.42%
2013/14	£156,620	£139,580	£17,040	-12.21%

Overall the demand for school transport is expected to increase; the projected change in demographics is outlined in the SEND Strategy 2015-20, which identifies that the number of young people diagnosed with a disability will increase. As a result, the demand for travel assistance is expected to increase having an effect on capacity and journey times.

3. Proposal to manage demand and budget

The council's school and post 16 travel assistance policy has been refreshed in line with Statutory Guidance. There has been no significant change in policy. It is our intention to ensure we support the principles within the policy and therefore our transport arrangements are efficient and equitable. Our intention is, where

possible to increase the numbers of young people that could be collected at a meeting point. This would affect overall journey times and will help to reduce overall cost.

Our intention would be to implement the policy in two phases – starting first with Post 16 providers and then introducing meeting points, where possible from September 2016 onwards for other routes.

Department for Education, Section 34 states; *‘As a general guide, transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time. Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.’*

It is hoped that the implementation of the revised policy will assist in reduction of journey times. The aim is to keep journey times below 60 minutes. In addition to savings and improved journey times the implementation of the School-Post 16 Travel Assistance policy will also support the changes introduced in The Children and Families Act 2014, creating less dependency on Council services, promoting independence, supporting and preparing families for the transition to adulthood.

In conjunction with the introduction of meeting points, we intend to refresh the local offer for Travel Training. Our intention is to offer Travel Training in the first instance to young people in Post 16 education to help support the development of independence skills. We are also intending to explore IT solutions to support travel training, minimise risk and anxiety of the student and parent which is currently one of the major blocks to travelling independently.

4. Stakeholder Engagement

We have met with the Heads of the Special Schools, and the Deputy Principal of the College regarding the implementation of the transport policy. They are supportive of its aims and have actively been identifying students that they believe could both travel independently and would benefit from this approach. We are holding an engagement event for parents in May, and will hold further engagement events at the special schools and the college so parents have the opportunity to understand the policy. It is acknowledged that transport changes can provoke anxiety. We will be working with parents and children/young people to understand that we will make changes on a case by case basis after discussion with families, however robust application of the criteria will apply to ensure fairness and equity.

We will be discussing any other ideas that parents have to promote greater independence in a transport workshop event.

We have worked with Passenger Transport Services to plan the implementation and are aware that this should bring the council overspend back in line with budget.

5. Comparator information

We have consulted with neighbouring boroughs to discuss the demand and costs for transport. In the main, most boroughs are facing the same issues. We are sharing information on the options we are implementing and will be following up with them on opportunities to learn from each other's initiatives.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

School and Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy Feb 2016