

CHILDREN AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:	SEND Transport Update
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Policy context:	The Education Act 1996 and LB Havering SEND Transport Policy.

SUMMARY

This report summarises the key issues regarding 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.

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.

This 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 this 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 develop 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 **must** 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

Currently in 2016/17 389 young people are provided travel assistance, of which 319 are on buses and 70 are in taxis. The Passenger Travel Service operates 34 buses on a daily basis which is the same number as last year. There is an overall decrease of 3% on the number of young people being transported compared to those in 2015/16. In 2015/16 402 young people were provided travel assistance in the form of a bus.

However, there has been an increase to the number of taxis being provided in comparison to this time last year, this equates to a 31% increase to costs for taxis' compared to this time last year (September 2015). The increase in budget is due to the slight increase in demand for taxi's, additional escorts as well as an increase in the numbers of young people accessing provision out of borough, the creation of new provision in Havering (Avelon Centre) and a change in the timetables for some young people at Havering College.

The total budget for 2016/17 is £2,248,610 for Home to School Transport, this includes Post 16. At this stage we are forecasting that there will be an overspend against allocated budgets of £303,976, which equates to 13.5% over budget. The majority of the overspend is in the post 16 transport.

Analysis of the financial trend over the last four years has been outlined in Table 1, it is evident that despite the budget being increased each financial year the demand for travel assistance continues to increase, as has the need for specialist support such as additional escorts, specialist transport resulting in the budget being overspent. It is envisaged that the continued implementation of the revised policy, which will include travel training will reduce the actual spend to within budget and keep pace with demand.

Alongside implementing the refreshed transport policy there is a need to change the culture and attitudes for council services, in particular for transport assistance. It has become the norm for many families to expect Home to School transport, and for this to be provided as a door to door service for all young people.

The demand for travel assistance is expected to increase as we have more complex young people in the borough due partially to the expected changes in demographics in Havering as outlined in the SEND Strategy 2015-2010.

As you will see from the table below the impact of implementing the transport policy is evident for Pre-16 expenditure. An additional £205,000 was allocated to the budget in 2016/17, this along with the implementation of the policy is helping to suppress the continued overspend and it is envisaged that the total overspend for the year will significantly lower than in previous years. We are continuing to transport approximately the same number of young people, and the focus on local provision and the introduction on pick up points has helped in managing the demand within budget. We have successfully introduced 58 pick-up points for young people aged below 16. The effects of implementing the policy for Post 16 have not been fully realised yet, however it is envisaged through the continued implementation of the policy and with the introduction of travel training we will be able to further reduce the overspend.

In addition we are continuing to develop local provision such as the Avelon Centre and are working with schools to develop further Additional Resourced Provision, and the an additional special school in Havering which will reduce the number of young people being placed out of borough. There will still be a need for transport; however as we work to bring people back to local specialist provision it is anticipated that transport costs will be significantly reduced. The SEND strategy outlines that the intention is to reduce the demand for out of borough residential placements, the implementation of this element of the strategy will take time as we need to develop the local market, however it is envisaged that by developing local services we will be able to reduce pressures on other budgets which in turn will help the service to operate within budget.

Our intention is to continue to develop the transport policy to expand on the range of transport options to support families, this will developing the option of accessing transport services through Transport for London. Transport for London provides free travel on buses for young people in education up to the age of 18, whilst this may not be suitable for the full cohort of young people, currently accessing services there may be some that could use this method of transport if supported by parents or as part of the travel training option.

Table 1. Financial trend Pre and Post 16

Pre 16	Budget	Actual / forecast spend	Overspend/ (Underspend)	% Variance
2016/17	£2,062,920	£2,132,566	£69,646	+3.38%
2015/16	£1,857,320	£2,018,859	£161,539	+8.70%
2014/15	£1,797,980	£1,867,755	£69,775	+3.88%
2013/14	£1,216,900	£1,782,422	£565,522	+46.47%

Post 16	Budget	Actual/forecast spend	Over/ (underspend)	% Variance
2016/17	£185,690	£420,020	£234,330	+126.19%
2015/16	£185,690	£360,666	£174,976	+94.23%
2014/15	£154,020	£110,035	(£43,985)	-28.56%
2013/14	£156,620	£139,580	(£17,040)	-10.88%

3. Managing 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; however we are now adhering to the policy more robustly.

One of the key changes which has been implemented in 2016/17 is the re-introduction of pick up points. Previously only 12 young people were being collected from a pick up point, this year we have increased this to 79 pick up points. The re-introduction of pick up points has impacted on journey times, and has now brought these closer to the max recommended time of 75 minutes. By continuing to introduce further pick up points where appropriate it is hoped that both journey times and costs will be reduced.

Furthermore our intention is to re-introduce travel training where appropriate. Whilst there will be initial costs associated with travel training it is envisaged that the impact will be evident in future years. We have awarded a new contract to DABD for the provision of travel training. This has been a joint tender across 4 boroughs – Havering, Newham, Barking & Dagenham and Redbridge. It is hoped that by having a joined approach across the cluster we will be able to embed travel training into the education offer, in particular with Post 16 providers where we should be preparing young people for adulthood. We have identified 98 people in this year's application process who will be offered travel training, of the 98 we have identified 58 have requested a travel training assessment. Our intention is to continue to work with local providers to commence the travel training programme for 2016/17.

Part of the strategy to reduce costs is linked to the SEND strategy to have a greater range of local provision to meet educational needs, in line with the increasing demand and complexity of need of our Havering children and young people. We will be reviewing out of borough placements to inform this process and where appropriate transition back to local provision.

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, as well as creating less dependency on Council services, promote independence, support and prepare families for the transition to adulthood.

4. Stakeholder Engagement

We have continued to meet with the three Heads of the Special Schools, and the Deputy Principal of the College regarding the implementation of the transport policy. They are broadly supportive and have actively been identifying students that they believe could both travel independently and would benefit from this approach. They have also supported the move to an on-line application form and have supported families to complete and return the form within the stated deadlines.

We have held an engagement event with Positive Parents in May, and held engagement events at the special schools so parents had the opportunity to understand the policy. We have worked with parents on an individual basis in order to implement the changes. In some cases families have provided further information which would support the appropriate transport solution. Our intention is to continue to work with key stakeholders, parents and young people as we continue to refresh the transport application and award process.

The next phase of implementing the transport policy will involve engagement with Schools and Post 16 providers. Our intention is to include school advice in relation to the appropriate transport solution and if it would be appropriate for a pick up point to be designated. This work will help us to imbed a cultural change in how and when transport support is provided.

We are continuing to work with Passenger Transport Services to plan the implementation and to forecast the potential savings that could be generated through the continued implementation of the transport policy.

5. Comparator information

We continue to consult 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

Appendix 1 – Four Year Breakdown of Financial Performance of Providing Transport Assistance for Young People in Havering

Financial Year	Budget £	Actual / Forecast Spend £	Overspend / (Underspend) £	Variance %	Annual Change in:	
					Budget £	Actual / Forecast Spend £
Pre 16 Year Old						
2016/17	2,062,920	2,132,566	69,646	3.38%	205,600	113,707
2015/16	1,857,320	2,018,859	161,539	8.70%	59,340	151,104
2014/15	1,797,980	1,867,755	69,775	3.88%	581,080	85,333
2013/14	1,216,900	1,782,422	565,522	46.47%		
Post 16 Year Old						
2016/17	185,690	420,020	234,330	126.19%	0	59,354
2015/16	185,690	360,666	174,976	94.23%	31,670	250,631
2014/15	154,020	110,035	(43,985)	-28.56%	(2,600)	(29,545)
2013/14	156,620	139,580	(17,040)	-10.88%		
Combined Pre & Post 16						
2016/17	2,248,610	2,552,586	303,976	13.52%	205,600	173,061
2015/16	2,043,010	2,379,525	336,515	16.47%	91,010	401,735
2014/15	1,952,000	1,977,790	25,790	1.32%	578,480	55,788
2013/14	1,373,520	1,922,002	548,482	39.93%		