



## CABINET

15 June 2011

## REPORT

**Subject Heading:**

Proposals for the provision of travel assistance to school for children with SEN  
Councillor Paul Rochford

**Cabinet Member:**

Andrew Ireland

**CMT Lead:**

**Report Author and contact details:**

Joe Coogan  
Assistant Director - Commissioning  
01708 431950  
joe.coogan@havering.gov.uk

**Policy context:**

Part of the Transformation Programme

**Financial summary:**

Strategy to achieve MTFS savings in respect of children's transport services totalling £200,000 during the financial year 2011/12, rising to £600,000pa by 2013/14  
Yes

**Is this a Key Decision?**

**Is this a Strategic Decision?**

**When should this matter be reviewed?**

June 2012

**Reviewing OSC:**

Children and Learning

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excellence in education and learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Value and enhance the life of every individual	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **SUMMARY**

This report seeks Cabinet's approval of proposals to change policy and practice relating to the provision of travel assistance to school or college for children and young people with special educational needs ("SEN"). This will represent a move away from the general expectation and assumption that a child with SEN will receive help in getting to school only in the form of a bespoke door-to-door service by bus or taxi.

The proposed changes will ensure that a high quality service can continue to be delivered whilst making efficiencies. They will on average seek to reduce journey times, enhancing quality of life for children and young people which in turn could assist educational performance. The proposed changes will mean that more children will be able to travel independently and will be better prepared for future learning or employment opportunities.

The proposals put forward have been developed and refined over the past nine months by Social Care & Learning in conjunction with the Council's Passenger Transport Service ("PTS"). Suggestions have also been welcomed from head teachers of the Borough's special schools, various parents' groups and voluntary sector organisations throughout the process. In addition, a thorough and formal consultation with parents of those potentially affected and, where appropriate, the children and young people who currently use the service has been undertaken.

Cabinet approval of the recommendations will enable the Council to create a more streamlined and efficient service and meet savings targets by (i) closely monitoring the needs and eligibility of those receiving assistance, (ii) using alternative travel solutions to fulfil its legal duties, and (iii) promoting schemes which encourage long-term independence.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet approve the following:

1. The adoption of the revised policy on travel assistance (Appendix A) which embodies the basic principles which are set out in recommendations 2 to 6.
2. The introduction of a requirement that parents must apply for travel assistance for their child in respect of each academic year.
3. The introduction of safe meeting points for children currently transported by PTS bus to Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools (subject to a full independent assessment of need).

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4. That children who are eligible for and given travel assistance in the form of door-to-door transport, will only be taken to and from the child's home address. New requests for travel assistance to school from an address other than the child's home will not be accommodated. Existing arrangements for a small number of families will continue while the children concerned remain eligible for door-to-door travel assistance to school.
5. The expansion of the existing travel training scheme to all children and young people with SEN who are assessed as being suitable and likely to benefit from such training.
6. The introduction of a mandatory assessment of suitability for travel training for all students with SEN:
  - on receipt of any new requests for assistance to get to school or college;
  - at the end of Key Stage 3 (approximately age 14), if already receiving Council assistance in getting to school; and
  - at age 21 for those in Further Education establishments and already receiving Council assistance in getting to college.
7. To enter into contracts for travel training, mobility assessments and route delivery with the voluntary sector or private sector where business cases are agreed with the Lead Member.

### **REPORT DETAIL**

#### **Background and context**

1. Savings targets were set out by Cabinet in July 2010, which included reducing the amount spent on Children's transport by £600,000pa by 2013/14. An interim target of £200,000 to be achieved in 2011/12 and 2012/13 was also agreed.
2. In order to plan how to meet these targets, an analysis of current home-to-school transport provision was carried out, illustrating that £2.2m was spent each year on the provision of a door-to-door transport service for approximately 400 children and young people with SEN: an average cost of over £5,000 per child per academic year. The majority - £1.6m - related to a bespoke bus service of 41 routes provided by the Council's Passenger Transport Service ("PTS"), with £400k being spent on private hire taxis, and the remainder on four routes serviced by other providers.
3. This presented considerable scope to improve efficiencies as well as the opportunity to revisit the Council's travel assistance policy in relation to children with SEN. There was deemed to be little, if any, scope to achieve savings in travel assistance provided to children without SEN at mainstream schools, as these pupils are already given help in the most

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cost-effective and independent manner (i.e. free travel on public buses in London).

4. All Local Authorities are under a legal obligation to organise suitable and free travel arrangements for children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their school due to their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems. However, it is not a requirement that the help given must be in the form of a door-to-door service as is currently provided in Havering.

### **Explanation of Proposals**

5. The current application process requires parents to complete and return a form giving details of their child's needs and circumstances in order to request travel assistance by way of a door-to-door Council bus or paid-for taxi. Once granted, transport in this form generally continues indefinitely with the onus being on parents to advise the Council if any circumstances change. During the consultation process, there was anecdotal evidence of situations where the Council had not been advised of a change in circumstances and transport had continued when it was no longer necessary. By introducing a policy whereby travel assistance (whether door-to-door or in another form) is granted on a year-by-year basis, this will allow the Council to review the suitability of the travel solution being offered and to tailor it accordingly.
6. The majority of children at the borough's three Special Schools currently receive travel assistance in the form of a Council bus which collects them from their home. This can result in long journey times, due to the length of the routes and the waiting time spent at each address. Safe meeting points are being considered for children at Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools. This would mean that parents would be expected to take their children to (and collect them from) one of several agreed meeting points along a route from which a Council bus would collect a small number of children at once. Safe meeting points would be identified by PTS and confirmed as suitable by a voluntary sector organisation. They would be located a short distance from each child's home. This arrangement would mean that routes would be much more direct, with much less waiting time. As a result, the number of routes required and the journey times could be reduced: the same number of children could be transported on slightly larger buses.
7. Currently, some children receiving door-to-door transport have arrangements in place with the Council to have their child collected from or taken to addresses other than the child's home on certain days of the week. This exceeds the statutory requirements to provide assistance with travel between a child's home and school. It also results in the need for unduly complex route-planning by PTS, and can lead to routes being less direct (and therefore longer) than they would otherwise be. The proposal not to accommodate any requests for new arrangements such as these is made in order to facilitate the efficient operational running of the service.

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8. Independent travel training gives children the support they need to learn to travel on public transport on their own, where this is assessed as appropriate to a child's needs. Travel training may be provided in the form of one-to-one training, covering all aspects ranging from road safety to journey planning, and would be tailored to each child or young person's circumstances. The child or young person would be accompanied by the trainer, or shadowed on their journey until the training professional was satisfied that the child had the necessary skills to travel unaided. This would result in fewer children requiring travel assistance in the form of a Council bus or paid-for taxi. Aside from this, the potential long-term benefits of successful training to the child or young person and their family are extensive.

### **Collaboration and Consultation**

9. From the inception of the project, Social Care & Learning have worked closely with PTS to come up with alternative means by which the Council can continue to meet its statutory duties to arrange suitable travel arrangements for those eligible for help in getting to and from school in a reasonable way. Discussions have been ongoing with head teachers of special schools and parents' groups which have been highly instrumental in creating and refining proposals prior to a formal consultation.
10. A consultation was held across April and May 2011 to help understand people's views on the proposals for change. This was targeted specifically at those potentially affected:
  - Parents and carers of current and known potential service users were sent a detailed questionnaire and were offered individual appointments to discuss proposals in person;
  - Children (service users) at two of the Borough's special schools provided their views using a simple pictorial questionnaire, completed in school time; and
  - Students (service users) at Havering College filled in a short questionnaire at college.
11. In addition, feedback was also sought from various voluntary sector organisations and head teachers of mainstream schools attended by children with SEN.
12. The results of the consultation are set out in detail in Appendix B. Many of the proposals were well supported, including an annual application for travel assistance, expansion of travel training schemes, and the adoption of basic principles in a revised school travel assistance policy.
13. There was however, more disagreement than support from families of service users over the reintroduction of safe meeting points, although a text message system was deemed to be a very popular means of making any introduction of safe meeting points run more smoothly. Responses to

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the suggestion of having a welfare escort waiting at the meeting point were inconclusive but this has not been ruled out. The operational details relating to the use of welfare escorts at safe meeting points will be considered when details are available of the children who will be attending those schools from September.

14. The enforcement of a rule on walking distances was deemed to be fair but the majority of respondents felt that the statutory distances were unreasonably long. It is proposed that the Council retains its current standard walking distances, which are shorter for infant age children (2.415km (1.5 miles) rather than 3.22km (2 miles)) and for junior age children (3.22km (2 miles) rather than 4.83km (3 miles)) than the statutory requirement.
15. Stricter enforcement of the policy relating to placements based on parental preference (i.e. that if parents choose to send their child to a school further away than a school deemed suitable by the Council for the child's needs and with a place available for the child, parents have to take responsibility for the arrangement and cost of travel to and from school) was unpopular with those who responded. It is proposed that the current policy is retained.
16. Responses from children and young people using the service demonstrated that many wanted to learn to travel to school or college independently in the future, with most wanting someone to help them learn by travelling with them. It should be noted that due to the range of needs of these children, what they would like to do and what they are capable of achieving are not necessarily the same. However, the general response to the concept of independent travel training was significantly positive from both the parents and the children/young people.
17. The children's and young people's response to the idea of safe meeting points was more evenly divided than that of their parents. The reason given for many of those in favour was that they enjoyed being with their friends. Most of those opposed to the idea liked being collected from home or travelling with a parent.

## **Considerations**

18. The consultation highlighted what was known from the outset: that each of the children and young people affected has a different level of need and that there cannot be a 'one size fits all' solution. This was already acknowledged by the fact that the proposals have been designed to have the minimum impact on those children attending Ravensbourne school, as they have on average the highest mobility needs: it simply would not be appropriate to consider options such as safe meeting points for these children.

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19. It also became apparent through the consultation that although the concept of safe meeting points for Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools would be a viable option for many, there would be a small number of children who, due to their level of need, simply would not be able to get safely to a meeting point. As a result, if the safe meeting points recommendation is accepted, a PTS vehicle would be used to continue a door-to-door service for those who had no other means of attending school.
20. The consultation results also highlighted serious reservations about Council's ability to assess a child's travel requirements solely on the grounds of individual need, and it was widely felt that more weight would be given to any financial considerations. For this reason, the involvement of a voluntary sector organisation to carry out such assessments independently and to provide travel training is vital to the implementation of the recommendations for safe meeting points and travel training. This move to independent assessments of individual needs would help to reassure parents that the needs of their child were the primary concern: such organisations exist to promote the best interests of children with special needs and would not benefit in any way from offering solutions (including travel training) which were not appropriate. It has been demonstrated that for independent travel training to be successful, the support of the child's family is crucial.

### **Summary**

21. The intended outcome of the recommendations is to create a more streamlined and efficient service in order to meet savings targets while offering the most independent and personally enabling solution to those eligible for help.
22. Whilst savings could be achieved simply by transporting fewer children and young people with SEN to school or college, the opportunity to initiate a shift in focus towards independence (where appropriate) emerged as the best long-term solution for the children, their families and the Council. A phased approach to such initiatives is intended to achieve the required savings by 2014 in the most positive and least disruptive manner possible.
23. The proposed changes will ensure that a high quality service can continue to be delivered whilst making efficiencies. They will on average seek to reduce journey times, enhancing quality of life for children and young people which in turn could assist educational performance. The proposed changes will mean that more children will be able to travel independently and will be better prepared for future learning or employment opportunities.

**REASONS AND OPTIONS**

**Reasons for the decision:**

1. The adoption of the revised policy will clearly set out the Council's aim of increasing independence and reducing reliance on Council-organised transport solutions.
2. An annual application for travel assistance will:
  - Ensure that only those who are eligible for help will receive it year-on-year;
  - Avoid transport solutions being paid for by the Council indefinitely where the student no longer meets the eligibility requirements; and
  - Enable the Council to identify where a student's circumstances have changed, so that the assistance offered can be tailored to suit their needs best.
3. The introduction of safe meeting points for pupils at Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools will reduce bus journey times for many children, as journeys will follow a more direct route with fewer stops.
4. Where door-to-door transport to school is provided, stipulating that for new applicants this will only be to and from the child's home address will enable the Council to carry out efficient route planning and make the best use of its resources, whilst meeting its statutory obligations.
5. Extending the travel training scheme to children with SEN who are assessed as suitable will:
  - Give increased freedom and quality of life;
  - Be an enabling process for future employment and social life; and
  - Develop social skills and increased self-confidence.
6. The introduction of mandatory assessments of suitability for travel training will enable the Council to identify as early as possible any children who would benefit from personalised travel training. By assessing children at Key Stage 3, the focus will not only be on helping them to be independent on their journey to school but also looking to their potential future journeys to college. For those in Further Education, training will improve their future employment prospects as they would be better prepared for travel to work.
7. Increased use of voluntary sector organisations will create a mixed economy and facilitate the smooth implementation of travel training and safe meeting point proposals in a cost-effective manner. This would be necessary for timely execution as the Council does not have sufficient staff resources to dedicate to this.



**Other options considered:**

- Do nothing: not a viable option given the financial pressures faced by the Council.
- Increase the maximum target journey time from 60 minutes to 75 minutes, in line with national guidelines: rejected due to the potential adverse impact on children.
- Outsource the entire current provision of home-to-school transport: rejected as did not address efficiency issues and would have hindered wider ambition to increase independence wherever possible.
- Use private hire taxis for home-to-school transport as an alternative to the Council's PTS buses: rejected as (i) soft market testing indicated that this would not result in any significant savings; (ii) there would be a negative environmental impact; and (iii) concern over having a large number of vehicles entering school premises at the start and end of the school day.
- Cease provision of travel assistance to 22-25 year olds attending Further Education Colleges as no legal duty to do so: rejected. However, travel training will be promoted for these young people and the Council will work with Colleges around the curriculum and timetabling.
- Offer of a mileage payment to parents who resume responsibility for taking their child to and from school: rejected as (i) concerns raised over fairness as many parents do already take their own children to school and do not expect payment; and (ii) deemed ethically unsound as, if parents are able to take their child to school, they should not be moved to do so only for potential financial gain.

**IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

**Financial implications and risks:**

It is difficult to quantify the full financial impact of these proposals as often the ability to generate savings will be dependent on change in respect of a child being transported by taxi or of a number of children being transported on the same PTS route. Additionally, some proposals will only reduce the level and cost of any new clients.

Changes to a route may generate savings for Social Care & Learning ("SCL") through a reduction in the charge from PTS. However, the vehicle and staff will still be employed by PTS and savings to the Council will only be achieved if PTS also reduce their costs or generate alternative income. PTS can realise some savings immediately, such as petrol, agency worker and overtime costs. Whereas others changes will require a lead-in time.

Therefore, a charging model has been agreed between SCL and PTS for when routes are changed. On giving notice of 6 months or one term of any changes, SCL will receive a reduced charge based on the new routes, thus contributing to their savings target. However, they will also continue to pay

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15% of the old charge until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 to contribute towards any fixed/exit cost PTS may incur.

PTS are currently considering options for reducing costs and/or generating additional income. Approval will be sought through the appropriate channels as these proposals are finalised.

Financial Implications of the individual recommendations can be difficult to quantify but estimates have been made wherever possible and details are set out below:

<b><u>Option</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated costs/(savings) Part Year (2011/12)</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated costs/(savings) Full Year (2012/13)</u></b>	<b><u>Estimated costs/(savings) Full Year (2013/14)</u></b>
<u>Introduction of safe meeting points (rec 3)</u> Notice given for a number of routes with changes to others.	<u>£70,000</u>	<u>£125,000</u>	<u>£150,000</u>
<u>External contracts for route delivery (rec 7)</u>	<u>£15,000</u>	<u>£50,000</u>	<u>£50,000</u>
<u>Expansion of the existing travel training scheme (rec 5)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>£60,000</u>	<u>£70,000</u>
<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b><u>£85,000</u></b>	<b><u>£235,000</u></b>	<b><u>£270,000</u></b>
In addition to the proposals within this report other action has been taken to re-organise/merge routes and change taxi provision which has generated savings	<u>£70,000</u>	<u>£75,000</u>	<u>£80,000</u>
<b><u>Total Savings Quantified</u></b>	<b><u>£155,000</u></b>	<b><u>£305,000</u></b>	<b><u>£350,000</u></b>
<b><u>Total MTFs Savings Target</u></b>	<b><u>£200,000</u></b>	<b><u>£200,000</u></b>	<b><u>£600,000</u></b>
<u>Balance to be achieved from proposals below / expansion of above proposals</u>	<u>£45,000</u>	<u>(£105,000)</u> <u>Some of 12/13 achieved early</u>	<u>£250,000</u>

<u>Annual application for travel (rec 2)</u> <u>Introduction of a mandatory assessment of suitability for travel training (rec 6)</u> <u>External contracts for travel training, mobility assessments (rec 7)</u> <u>Adoption of the revised policy on travel assistance (rec 1)</u> <u>Travel to/from home address only (rec 4)</u>	Savings achieved will be dependent on individual children mode of transport affected. The number and cost of any new children being transported will also be affected.
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Some of the Risks to the achievement of these targets are as follows:

- Children do not respond to travel training given and/or parents resist the changes.
- Tenders for external contracts do not deliver reduced prices.
- PTS are unable to reduce their costs as anticipated – notice of 6 months or one term and payment of 15% should help to mitigate this risk.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

The Cabinet must carefully consider the outcome of the consultation and the equality analysis before making its decision. All consultation responses and any adverse impacts highlighted in the equality analysis must be conscientiously considered to ensure that the decision is lawful.

The draft travel assistance policy appears to be compliant with the legislation and Guidance. No consultation responses were received raising any legal issues. If any challenges were made to the legality of the policy these could be dealt with by routing them through the representations procedure set out in the policy. The legislation that is the foundation of this policy is complex and therefore it is possible that any legal challenges to its content might involve detailed analysis.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

Any subsequent consequential reduction in posts in Passenger Transport Services that result in an impact on employees will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Managing Organisational Change and Redundancy policy and procedure.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

A full equality analysis has been carried out in relation to the potential impact of the proposals and is attached as Appendix C.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Consultation Responses

**APPENDIX A: REVISED SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

**SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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.

The Education Act 1996 (as amended) requires Local Authorities to make such suitable and free travel arrangements for 'eligible children' as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school. This 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 who may also be entitled to assistance.

This policy has been approved by the Council's Elected Members and complies with and exceeds the legislative minimum.

## **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

This policy is underpinned by the following general principles:

- That 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.
- That 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.
- That students who have specific travel needs will be offered the most independent and personally enabling solution for their situation.
- That 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.
- That 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.
- That 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.
- That the use of existing provision such as free travel on public buses in London will be encouraged wherever possible.

### **3. TYPES OF TRAVEL ASSISTANCE**

If assistance over and above free travel on public buses is required, the most appropriate type of travel assistance will be established by the Council following an assessment of the travel needs of the child. Family circumstances will be taken into account but requests from parents for a particular form of assistance will not unduly influence the final decision. The types of travel assistance which may be granted include:

- Provision of escorted walking route to school.
- Provision of a Welfare Escort or travel buddy to assist with travel.
- Provision of a seat on a vehicle which will transport the child or young person to their school or college from an agreed meeting point.
- Provision of a seat on a vehicle which will transport extremely vulnerable pupils from their home address to school or college.
- Provision of a pre-paid travel card for the child or young person to enable access to train or tube services.
- Provision of a pre-paid travel card for parents to enable them to accompany their child to and from school.
- Reimbursement of fares for travel to and from school arranged by parents up to the value of a travel card, and with the prior agreement of the Council.
- Reimbursement of fuel costs either by payment of mileage allowances or up to the value of a single travel card, based on mileage claims submitted by parents from an agreed Havering address to the child's school.
- Combinations of the above arrangements.

### **4. ELIGIBLE CHILDREN**

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 amended the Education Act 1996, setting out the definition of 'eligible children'. Those who qualify for free travel arrangements to and from school are defined as:

- (i) Children living beyond the statutory walking distance of their school: two miles for children under the age of 8; or three miles for children aged 8 or over.
- (ii) Children living within the statutory walking distance but who are unable to walk to school in safety due to the nature of the route.
- (iii) Children who are entitled to free school meals and/or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit.
- (iv) Children living within the statutory walking distance but who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school due to their special educational

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needs, disability or mobility problems, including temporary medical conditions.

The Council has adopted standard walking distances which are shorter than those specified by statute. The relevant distances are:

- 1.5 miles (2.415 km) for infant age children (Reception, Years 1 and 2)
- 2 miles (3.22 km) for junior age children (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6)
- 3 miles (4.83 km) for secondary age children (Years 7 to 11)

The travel needs of the majority of children in Havering will be appropriately met by entitlement to free travel on London's buses, which is provided regardless of distance from school. However, a small number may qualify for alternative or additional help as set out in this policy.

### **5. SUITABLE QUALIFYING SCHOOL**

A qualifying school in the context of this policy means:

- (a) a community, foundation or voluntary school;
- (b) a community or foundation special school;
- (c) a non-maintained special school;
- (d) a pupil referral unit;
- (e) a maintained nursery school;
- (f) an Academy; or
- (g) an independent school (only in certain cases in relation to a child with special educational needs).

A suitable school is one that offers an efficient full-time education suitable to a pupil's age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs the child may have. Consideration will also be given to the wishes of parents for a child to be provided with education or training at a particular school based on the parents' religion or belief.

### **6. ELIGIBILITY: DISTANCE**

#### **6.1 Walking Distances**

The Council's standard walking distances are set out in section 4 above.

The walking distance is measured from a child's home address to the nearest entrance to the school using the shortest available route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety to school. The Council may take into account any circumstances which prevent the child from being accompanied by the parent. Distances are calculated using an independent on-line route planner.

#### **6.2 Eligibility criteria**

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The vast majority of children eligible for travel assistance under this section would have their needs met by the provision of free travel on public buses in London. However, those who require additional or alternative assistance should apply using the Application for Travel Assistance form provided that:

- (a) the school is further than the standard walking distance from the child's home; and
- (b) the Council has been unable to allocate a place for the child at any suitable qualifying school within the standard walking distance.

### **7. ELIGIBILITY: SAFETY**

Where a child lives within the standard walking distance of the nearest qualifying school, the Council will provide travel assistance where the nature of the route is such that the child cannot reasonably be expected to walk (accompanied as necessary) in reasonable safety.

In assessing whether or not a route is safe, the Council will take into account a range of factors including:

- the age of the child;
- whether risks might be less if the child were accompanied by an adult and whether this would be practicable;
- the width of any roads travelled along and the existence of pavements;
- the volume and speed of traffic;
- existence of street lighting; and
- different conditions at different times of year.

Disabilities of the child's parents will also be considered where a walking route would be considered safe if the child were accompanied but where the parents' disability prevents them from doing so.

Parents of children requiring travel assistance to school under this section should apply using the Application for Travel Assistance form.

### **8. ELIGIBILITY: LOW INCOME FAMILIES**

If a child is entitled to free school meals and/or the child's parent is in receipt of the maximum rate of Working Tax Credit, the child is eligible for travel assistance in the following circumstances where:

- (a) (i) the child is aged 8 or more but has not yet reached age 11; and  
(ii) the school the child attends is more than two miles from the child's home; and  
(iii) the school is the nearest suitable qualifying school at which a place is available.



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- (b) (i) where the child is aged 11 or over; and
  - (ii) the school the child attends is more than two miles but not more than six miles from the child's home; and
  - (iii) there are not three or more suitable qualifying schools at which a place is available nearer to the child's home.
  
- (c) (i) where the child is aged 11 or over; and
  - (ii) the school the child attends is more than two miles but not more than 15 miles from the child's home; and
  - (iii) the child's parent has expressed a wish, based on the parent's religion or belief, for the child to be provided with education at that school; and
  - (iv) having regard to the religion or belief on which the parent's wish is based, there is no suitable qualifying school at which a place is available nearer to the child's home.

The Council deems category (a) to refer to children of junior school age, and categories (b) and (c) to children of secondary school age.

If assistance over and above free travel on public buses is required, parents should apply using the Application for Travel Assistance form.

### **9. ELIGIBILITY: SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ("SEN")**

Generally, the Council expects the majority of children either to walk to school or travel independently on free public transport. However, the Council acknowledges that children with Statements of Special Educational Needs may require alternative or additional travel assistance.

Where transport needs are identified in a child's Statement of SEN and travel assistance is given, this will be provided for the current academic year. The needs and circumstances of the child will be reviewed annually in the Annual Review of the Statement of SEN and on receipt of application for travel assistance for the following academic year. Changes identified in a child's needs or circumstances may lead to changes to the type of assistance provided.

Each request for travel assistance will be considered on its own merits, and decisions in a small minority of cases may depart from the criteria if there are exceptional circumstances that apply. Reasons for decisions will be recorded and reviewed as appropriate.

#### **9.1 Children under 16 (or up to 19 with Statement of SEN)**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly. The Council would not expect parents to unreasonably refuse to accompany their children if this is appropriate to a child's needs. In some cases, it may be appropriate to enter an agreement to reimburse parents for travel costs.

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If assessment shows that it would be inappropriate for a child to travel independently and the parents are unable to accompany child, the Council may decide to arrange transport from designated meeting point which, depending on the severity or complexity of the child's physical or learning needs, may be the child's home.

### **9.2 Types of School**

#### **Havering Special Schools and Specially Resourced Units, Pupil Referral Units and Mainstream Schools and Academies**

Whether attending one of Havering's Special Schools, a mainstream school with a Specially Resourced Unit, a Pupil Referral Unit or mainstream schools or academies, children with Statements of Special Education Needs may be entitled to travel assistance on the grounds of distance, vulnerability or physical disability.

If such reasons apply and parents are unable to take responsibility for the journey to and from school, they may apply for travel assistance. The Council will arrange for an assessment of the child's travel needs to be carried out to ensure that assistance of an appropriate nature is offered.

#### **Residential Schools**

Children placed in Residential Schools by the Council may be entitled either to door-to-door transport at the beginning and end of every school week or half term (depending on whether the child is at a weekly or termly boarding establishment), or to the reimbursement of their parents' travel costs in accordance with an agreement drawn up when the placement is made.

#### **Out of Borough Schools**

Where the Council has determined that an out of borough Special School placement is appropriate, parents will be offered the option of making their own arrangements. They will be reimbursed either the additional cost of public transport or at a mileage rate agreed by the Council if using their own vehicles.

### **9.3 Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance and Freedom Pass**

Parents receive the Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance so that they can make provision themselves for their child's travel. Where the Mobility Component is paid or a car is provided under the Motability Scheme, it is the view of the Council that there should be exceptional reasons to justify providing travel assistance, as it has already been provided through public funding.

Where a child has applied for and received a Freedom Pass on the grounds of their disability, it is expected that this would be used for travelling to and from

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school. Exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to justify any additional assistance from the Council.

### **9.4 Placements Based on Parental Preference**

When a child is admitted to the parents' preferred school and there is another suitable qualifying school (please see section 5 of this policy) located closer to the home address, then the parents will be responsible for arranging and meeting the costs of their child's journey to and from school.

## **10. ELIGIBILITY: POST-16 STUDENTS**

### **10.1 Free and Discounted Travel from Transport for London**

Free bus travel is provided by Transport for London for under 19s attending full-time education courses (free travel expires at the end of the academic year in which the student turns 18). A 30% discount on adult travel cards and bus passes is also available for students aged 18-25. Some young people may also be eligible for a Freedom Pass on the grounds of their disability. These provisions are deemed suitable for the majority of Havering students over the age of 16.

### **10.2 Students aged 16-19 with a Statement of SEN attending School**

These students may be eligible for travel assistance under the provision set out in section 9.1 of this policy.

### **10.3 Young Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities ("LDD")**

The Council has a duty to support participation in education and training for young adults aged 19-25 with learning difficulties and disabilities. This duty ceases at the end of the academic year in which student turns 25 and applies to Havering residents only. The travel needs of those students aged 16-19 attending college or training whose statement of SEN will have lapsed but who have a s139a Moving On Plan will also be supported by the Council, where necessary.

If assistance over and above free and discounted travel on public buses in London is required, application should be made using the Application for Travel Assistance form.

Additional travel assistance for these students may be provided in various forms. However, students with LDD should have access to independent travel training as part of their curriculum and participation in this will be encouraged, where appropriate.

## **11. ELIGIBILITY: TEMPORARY MEDICAL OR MOBILITY NEEDS**

If a child who normally walks or uses free bus travel to get to school cannot for medical reasons do so for a period of time, alternative assistance will be

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provided where the Council is satisfied that the parents are unable to make arrangements for the pupil to be taken to school. Supporting medical evidence must be provided (see "How to Apply"). The provision of assistance under this section will be time-limited, based on the medical evidence concerning the nature and expected duration of the child's medical condition.

### **12. HOW TO APPLY**

#### **Free travel on public buses in London**

Children aged 10 or under can travel free anywhere in London at any time on public buses without a ticket or Oyster photocard.

Children aged 11-15 can travel free anywhere in London at any time on public buses with a valid Oyster photocard.

Young people aged 16-19 in full-time education and living in a London Borough can travel free anywhere in London at any time on public buses with a valid 16+ Oyster photocard.

Further concessions may also be available for travel on London's Tube, DLR and Overground services. Visit Transport for London's website for further details: [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

#### **Additional or alternative travel assistance**

For parents of children or young people applying for additional or alternative travel assistance under sections 6 (Distance), 7 (Safety), 8 (Low Income Families), 9 (SEN) or 10 (Post-16) of this policy, an Application for Travel Assistance form must be submitted in respect of each academic year for which the child requires assistance. Once travel assistance has been granted initially, forms for the following year will be sent by the Council to parents for the subsequent academic year. Failure to return applications by the deadline specified will result in an assumption that travel assistance is not required for that academic year and it will be withdrawn.

For parents of children applying under section 11 (Temporary Medical or Mobility Needs), the Temporary Travel Assistance Application should be used. Supporting medical evidence, usually from a General Practitioner (GP) or Consultant Physician, must be provided with the application. As assistance is time limited, further medical evidence may be required if travel assistance is to be extended beyond the period initially approved.

### **13. PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE**

The Council will encourage and actively support children and young people in Havering who are capable of learning to travel independently. Travel training may be provided in the form of one-to-one training, covering all aspects ranging from road safety to journey planning, and would be tailored to each

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child or young person's circumstances. Schools and colleges may also embark on their own programmes.

In order to identify those suitable for personalised travel training, the Council may arrange mobility assessments at the following stages:

- On receipt of any new requests for assistance in getting to school or college.
- At the end of Key Stage 3 (approximately age 14), if already receiving Council assistance in getting to school.
- At age 21 for those in Further Education establishments and already receiving Council assistance in getting to college.

The Council's aim is, wherever possible, to give increased freedom and quality of life to Havering's children and young people. As well as being an enabling process for future employment, successful travel training has been demonstrated to increase self-confidence dramatically.

### **14. THE ROLE OF PARENTS**

The Council is mindful of the difficulties faced by families of children with significant or complex needs which can impact on their ability to support their child on their journey to school. However, parents are expected not to unreasonably withhold their support in assisting their child. Where a child is identified as being suitable for and able to benefit from independent travel training, the Council expects parents to support the child in this.

Where travel assistance is given in the form of transport from a designated meeting point (which may be the child's home), parents are expected to make the following commitments to ensure the smooth-running of any arrangements:

- To provide up to date contact details (in particular, telephone numbers) so that the Council's Transport Commissioning Unit ("TCU") can advise parents of any delays or problems.
- To ensure that the child is ready to be collected at the arranged time and place.
- To ensure that the parent (or other appropriate adult) is waiting to receive the child at the arranged time and place at the end of the school day.
- To telephone TCU as soon as possible if the child not going to school for any reason.

Where a child will only be able to travel safely if a parent is present, the parent can be requested to act as escort for the child. This is not remunerated.

## **15. TRANSPORT OPERATION**

### **15.1 Arrangements**

Where travel assistance is provided in the form of a seat on a vehicle to transport the child to and from school or college, the operational arrangements are made by the Council's Transport Commissioning Unit ("TCU"). Pick up and drop-off times are arranged so that journey times are minimised and cannot be varied to suit the parent. Changes to arrangements will be made as and when deemed necessary by TCU for the efficient running of the service. TCU is unable to accommodate parental preference for a particular form of transport or contractor. Drivers and Welfare Escorts are not authorised to make any informal arrangements with parents with regards to routes, timings or collection/drop-off addresses.

### **15.2 Contact Details**

The TCU can be contacted on either 01708 433924 or 01708 433843. For out-of-hours assistance, for example to notify the Council early in the morning that a child is not attending school that day and does not require transport, please call the Passenger Transport Service on 01708 433162, 01708 433184 or 01708 433185.

### **15.3 Home to School/College arrangements**

In circumstances where a door-to-door service is given, the child will only be transported to and from the home address and the educational establishment. To avoid unduly complicated operational arrangements and to enable efficient route planning, requests to collect from or drop off at an address other than the child's home will not be accommodated.

### **15.4 Safety and Supervision**

All vehicles and staff, including those provided by the Council's Passenger Transport Service as well as by private contractors, will be required to comply with industry and legislative standards. These include compliance with staff and vehicle checks.

Risk assessments of routes and safe meeting points will be undertaken as necessary according to the needs of the children using that route.

Welfare Escorts will be provided on vehicles transporting vulnerable children to ensure the safety and well-being of those passengers. All Welfare Escorts, whether employed by the Council or provided through an agency or private contractor, are required to undergo screening by the Criminal Records Bureau and will be subject to any changes in the legislation regarding safe recruitment. All are required to conform to the same health and safety and training requirements.

## **15.5 Guidance on Transporting Wheelchair Users**

Parents are advised to provide full details of the wheelchair used, so that appropriate safety fixing clamps can be purchased. The Council's Passenger Transport Service will be pleased to arrange to examine the wheelchair to determine the best fixing method before the child's travel assistance begins.

## **16. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS**

### For SEN or Post-16:

Appeals against a decision to provide a certain type of assistance, or refusal of travel assistance should be made in the first instance to the Manager of Special Educational Needs. In the event that the parent remains unhappy with the result of the appeal, the details would be passed to the Head of Children and Young People's Services.

### For categories other than SEN or Post-16:

Appeals against a decision to provide a certain type of assistance, or refusal of travel assistance should be made in the first instance to the Manager of Additional Education Needs Services. In the event that the parent remains unhappy with the result of the appeal, the details would be passed to the Head of Learning and Achievement.

### Complaints regarding transport service

Complaints relating to the day-to-day operation of transport or the transport service received should be directed to The Passenger Travel Service Manager.

## APPENDIX B: CONSULTATION RESULTS

### 1. Consultation with parents/carers through detailed consultation questionnaire:

121 of 385 returned (31.43%)

(Percentages shown below represent the percentage of those who participated in the consultation. Full data of the results of the consultation with parents appears on page 4 of this appendix)

#### Annual Application

**59.60%** thought a requirement for an annual application for travel assistance was fair, i.e. in respect of each academic year.

There was some concern over the prospect of more form-filling, and some felt that as their child's needs were never going to change, there could never be any need to change existing travel arrangements.

Those supportive of the idea commented that each case should be treated individually and that the application process must be fair.

#### Statutory walking distance

**60.33%** thought a stricter enforcement of a standard walking distance was fair. However, more than 67% of respondents felt that the statutory walking distances were too long.

The average distances which parents/carers suggested as being reasonable were **0.8 miles** for children under 8 (as opposed to the statutory 2 miles) and **1.4 miles** for children aged 8 or over (rather than the statutory 3 miles). However, comments from many people indicated that they were considering this only from the perspective of children with special needs and that what a reasonable distance was would often depend on the child and their circumstances.

#### Suggestions for encouraging parents to transport their child

**27.43%** of respondents on average supported the various suggestions for encouraging parents to take their children to school. To put this in context, it should be noted that **57.89%** either: did not indicate a preference; thought that none of the suggestions was fair; or marked this section as 'not applicable' due to the fact that they did not drive/own a car.

#### Reintroduction of safe meeting points

**57.02%** are against the reintroduction of safe meeting points. A third of these responded negatively to all suggestions to ease the potential implementation of this.



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**33.88%** thought that the reintroduction of safe meeting points for Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools was fair, although many questioned why this was not also being considered for other schools.

Support for the various suggestions to ease implementation ranged between **38.02%** and **53.72%**, the most popular being the use of a text message system to let parents/carers know if the bus is running on time or delayed for any reason.

**46.28%** thought that it was a good idea to have an escort waiting at the safe meeting point. However, when offered a choice between (a) having fewer meeting points and an escort waiting and (b) having more meeting points and no escort waiting, opinion was split fairly evenly with **29.75%** choosing option (a) and **34.17%** choosing option (b). Over a quarter of those who replied expressed no preference.

### Expansion of Travel Training scheme

**65.29%** supported the expansion of independent travel training, with **57.85%** thinking that mandatory assessments for suitability for training at various points in a child's school life were fair.

Some were extremely supportive and commented that they would like their child to have travel training now; others felt that it would never be appropriate for their own child. There was concern over the Council's ability to assess a child's suitability and readiness for travel training without being influenced by financial considerations.

A suggestion was given by one parent that travel buddies should be used: "Create a meeting point where several students could gather, then team them with a travel buddy or escort to use public transport to get to their school or college."

### Enforcement of policy relating to parental preference

**58.68%** of those who replied thought it was unfair to enforce the parental preference rule, i.e. that if parents choose to send their child to a school further away than one deemed suitable by the Council for their child's needs, parents would be responsible for making and paying for travel arrangements.

Many of those who responded commented that parents should be able to decide which school is suitable and that they were in a better position to do so than the Council, which may be influenced by financial considerations.

There was also concern that enforcement of the policy would mean that children with SEN would be forced into mainstream schools when this would not be appropriate.

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### Basic Principles relating to travel assistance

**61.98%** thought that the suggested basic principles to be included in a revised policy on school travel assistance were fair.

Some felt that the principles simply would not apply to their child; others wanted an entirely separate policy for children with SEN.

### Other

Some parents highlighted the stress which families of children with SEN are already under, and expressed concern about potential distress and upset if transport provision were reduced, or if a child with SEN had to adapt to a different routine. Others simply thought that 'cuts' should be made 'elsewhere'.

Overall, the comments emphasised the need to consider each child's SEN and circumstances individually and impartially.

### Statistical data

Current mode of transport used by children of those who responded:

<b>Mode:</b>	<b>Number:</b>	<b>Percentage:</b>
Bus (Council)	99	81.82%
Bus (public)	4	3.31%
Taxi	1	0.83%
Taxi (Council)	15	12.40%
Not specified	2	1.65%

Ethnicity of the parents/carers who responded:

White UK	94	77.69%
White Irish	1	0.83%
White - other European	2	1.65%
White - other	2	1.65%
Black UK	3	2.48%
Black African	5	4.13%
Mixed - other	1	0.83%
Asian UK	1	0.83%
Asian - Chinese	2	1.65%
Asian - Indian	2	1.65%
Asian Bangladeshi	1	0.83%
Other	1	0.83%
Not specified	6	4.96%

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Proposal	Yes	Yes %	No	No %	N/A	Nil	No/Nil %
Annual Application	72	59.50%	38	31.40%	1	10	9.09%
Enforcement of Statutory Walking Distance:							
Two miles for under 8s	73	60.33%	43	35.54%	1	4	4.13%
Three miles for aged 8 and over	31	25.62%	85	70.25%	1	4	4.13%
	34	28.10%	82	67.77%	1	4	4.13%
Suggestions to encourage parents to take their children to school:							
Increased parking at Special Schools	36	29.75%	77	63.64%	5	3	6.61%
More Park and Stride initiatives	33	27.27%	71	58.68%	5	12	14.05%
Staggered start/finish times	35	28.93%	74	61.16%	5	7	9.92%
Arrange meetings with other parents	28	23.14%	81	66.94%	5	7	9.92%
Mileage payment of 40p per mile	34	28.10%	76	62.81%	5	6	9.09%
Safe Meeting Points (Corbets Tey/Dycorts)							
	41	33.88%	69	57.02%	5	6	9.09%
Suggestions to help introduction of safe meeting points (SMPs):							
SMPs to be Council-controlled buildings	46	38.02%	55	45.45%	5	15	16.53%
SMPs max 10 minute walk from home	52	42.98%	51	42.15%	5	13	14.88%
10 minute window waiting time at SMP	47	38.84%	55	45.45%	5	14	15.70%
Text message system to inform parents	65	53.72%	38	31.40%	5	13	14.88%
GPS tracking for parents to monitor bus	48	39.67%	53	43.80%	5	15	16.53%
Escort waiting at SMP prior to pick-up time	56	46.28%	45	37.19%	5	15	16.53%
Option 1: fewer SMPs + an escort at SMP	36	29.75%	49	40.50%	5	31	29.75%
Option 2: more SMPs + no escort at SMP	41	34.17%	42	35.00%	5	32	30.83%
Expansion of travel training scheme							
	79	65.29%	31	25.62%	1	10	9.09%
Mandatory assessments for travel training	70	57.85%	38	31.40%	1	12	10.74%
Enforcement of parental preference rule							
	41	33.88%	71	58.68%	1	8	7.44%
Basic principles for inclusion in policy							
	75	61.98%	32	26.45%	1	13	11.57%

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2. Consultation with children and young people through simple and pictorial questionnaires:

- 65 pictorial questionnaires were completed by children at Corbets Tey School
- 45 pictorial or simplified questionnaires were completed by children at Dycorts School
- 70 simplified questionnaires from students at Quarles campus of Havering College

Some pupils at Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools had completed the questionnaire even though they already travel to school independently, or are brought to school by parents. The detailed results data which follows at the end of this section shows the results in two different ways: the first reflecting the views only of those potentially affected by the proposals and the second showing all feedback.

32 of the questionnaires completed at Quarles campus had been filled in by students who were already travelling to college independently, or who were being brought by parents or by transport from another London Borough. These responses have not been factored into the data set out below.

Corbets Tey School

**60.94%** of children wanted to learn to travel to school independently in the future. This figure rose to **70.21%** when those who would not be directly affected by the proposals (e.g. because they are brought to school by their parents) were excluded from the calculations. Most of those who like the idea wanted someone to help them learn or to come with them to start with.

**39.06%** wanted to meet their school friends at a safe meeting point and get on the school bus together. This figure rose to **44.68%** in relation to those who would be directly affected by the proposals. The majority of those in favour liked the idea because they wanted to be with their friends. Those against the idea generally wanted to be picked up from home, or to come to school with a parent.

Dycorts School

**47.37%** of children wanted to learn to travel to school independently in the future. This figure rose to **50.00%** when those who would not be directly affected by the proposals (e.g. because they are brought to school by their parents) were excluded from the calculations. Most of those who like the idea wanted someone to help them learn or to come with them to start with.

**53.66%** wanted to meet their school friends at a safe meeting point and get on the school bus together. This figure rose to **63.33%** in relation to those who would be directly affected by the proposals. The majority of those in favour liked the idea because they wanted to be with their friends. Those against the idea generally wanted to be picked up from home, or to come to school with a parent.

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### Quarles Campus of Havering College

Of the 38 young people who were currently transported either by PTS bus or by a taxi paid for by the Council, **43.59%** wanted to learn to travel on their own in the future. The same number, **43.59%**, liked the idea of safe meeting points (generally either because they wanted to be with their friends or because they thought it would make them more independent), although this is not something being proposed for students at Quarles campus.

### Overall

When examining the responses in respect only of those children and young people potentially affected by the proposals, **56.03%** wanted to learn to travel to school or college independently in the future and **51.95%** liked the idea of safe meeting points.

The most popular response when asked what they liked about their current journey was being with their friends. The most common answers about what they disliked about the current journey were that it was too noisy on the bus and that the journey took too long.

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Results of existing service users, i.e. those currently on Council transport (bus or taxi):

Responses from Quarles regarding safe meeting points excluded, as only proposed for Corbets Tey and Dycorts

Proposal	School/College	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Nil	% Nil	Not sure	% N/s
Travel independently in the future	<b>Total:</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>56.03%</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33.62%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.90%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.45%</b>
	Corbets Tey	33	70.21%	11	23.40%	3	6.38%	0	0
	Dycorts	15	50.00%	10	33.33%	2	7.41%	3	10.00%
	Quarles	17	43.59%	18	46.15%	3	7.69%	1	2.56%
Safe meeting points (meet friends somewhere safe and get on school bus together)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>51.95%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33.77%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12.99%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.30%</b>
	Corbets Tey	21	44.68%	19	40.43%	7	14.89%	0	0
	Dycorts	19	63.33%	7	23.33%	3	10.34%	1	3.33%

Results of all children who responded (including some not on Council transport):

Proposal	School/College	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Nil	% Nil	Not sure	% N/s
Travel independently in the future	<b>Total:</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>52.48%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>34.04%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9.93%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3.55%</b>
	Corbets Tey	39	60.94%	19	29.69%	6	9.38%	0	0
	Dycorts	18	47.37%	11	28.95%	5	13.16%	4	10.53%
	Quarles	17	43.59%	18	46.15%	3	7.69%	1	2.56%
Safe meeting points (meet friends somewhere safe and get on school bus together)	<b>Total:</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>44.44%</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>38.19%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>15.97%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1.39%</b>
	Corbets	25	39.06%	28	43.75%	11	17.19%	0	0
	Dycorts	22	53.66%	9	21.95%	8	19.51%	2	4.88%
	Quarles	17	43.59%	18	46.15%	4	10.26%	0	0

**APPENDIX C: EQUALITY ANALYSIS**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING EQUALITY ANALYSIS**  
**PROPOSED POLICY, SERVICE, PROJECT, PROGRAMME, ORGANISATION, OR OTHER EXECUTIVE**  
**DECISION**

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**SCOPE OF PROPOSAL**

**1. What is the scope and intended outcomes of the proposal, in terms of both the Council's organisation and staffing, and services to the community?**

The Council's policy and practice in relation to the provision of travel assistance to school or college for children and young people with special educational needs are being reviewed with the aim of increasing efficiency and promoting independence.

**1 (a) Organisation and Staffing**

Increased efficiencies and a likely reduction in the number of home-to-school routes provided by the Council's Passenger Transport Service may result in a reduction in the number of drivers and escorts required. In the longer term, it is possible that there may be a need to review the number of managerial staff at the Passenger Transport Service ("PTS"), if business cannot be won from other areas. A more flexible fleet will mitigate this risk by providing more opportunities.

**1 (b) Services to the Community**

All Local Authorities are under a legal obligation to organise suitable and free travel arrangements for children who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their school due to their special educational needs, disability or mobility problems. The Council currently meets this obligation by transporting the majority of eligible children with special educational needs to and from their educational establishments by Council bus or by private hire taxis paid for by the Council in a bespoke door-to-door arrangement.

A review of the policy and practice has been initiated in light of savings targets set by Cabinet in July 2010, to be achieved over the next three years. By monitoring the needs and eligibility of those receiving assistance, considering alternative means of fulfilling its legal duties, and promoting schemes which encourage long-term independence, the Council can continue to provide a high quality service whilst achieving the required efficiency savings.

The intended outcome of the project is to create a more streamlined and efficient service in order to meet savings targets while offering the most independent and personally enabling solution to those eligible for help.

**PEOPLE AFFECTED**

**2. Which individuals and groups are likely to be affected by the proposal?**

**2 (a) Staff Individuals and Groups**

PTS staff, primarily drivers and welfare escorts.

It should be noted that some welfare escorts are employed on a casual basis or through an agency.



**2 (b) Community Individuals and Groups**

Current users (children and young people with special educational needs)  
Parents and carers of current users and known potential users  
Havering Community Transport (potential for new business)  
Disablement Association of Barking & Dagenham (potential for new business)

**DATA AND INFORMATION**

**3. What data/information do you have about the presence of people with ‘protected characteristics’ or other socio-economic disadvantage among these individuals and groups? What information do you have about how they will be affected by the proposal? Will you be seeking further information in order to assess the equalities impact of the proposal? How is this information being used to influence decisions on the proposal?**

**3 (a) Staff**

The following percentage data in relation to the Passenger Transport Service workforce was correct as at October 2010:

Disability: 1.8%  
Race: 2.8%  
Gender: 60% female; 40% male

Age: retirement projections showed that the following percentages of the workforce could be retired in:

5 years: 32%  
10 years: 53%  
15 years: 82%

This information is not being used to influence decisions on the proposal but it illustrates that any changes to the number of staff required as a result of any transformation of the service could be accommodated by the natural turnover and retirement of staff, if previous patterns continue.

**3 (b) Community**

By virtue of the service concerned, the users are children and young people aged between 3 and 25 with special educational needs (“SEN”), i.e. children and young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn or access education than most children of the same age. The majority of those aged 3 to 19 (although not all) have statements of special educational need.

These individuals will be affected because they are the ones who are provided with a door-to-door service to get to and from school: this service has the potential to be altered to create more efficient and personally enabling travel solutions. Children without SEN who are eligible for travel assistance on other grounds (e.g. from low income families), are already provided with assistance in the most cost-effective and independent manner, i.e. free travel on public transport.

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The very nature of the user group affected means that within the proposals, it is important to be sensitive to the different levels of need of individuals. This has been considered from the outset and for example, it is accepted that proposals such as safe meeting points may be appropriate for children with certain SEN but are not deemed suitable for other children with more severe and profound disabilities. The proposed changes have been designed to reflect that certain travel solutions are not viable for all of the affected users, and that individual needs must still be taken into account.

When the project was initiated, postcodes of children using the PTS bus service to attend the borough's Special Schools were mapped. The attached map (Appendix A) relating to Corbets Tey School (which has the highest number of children with SEN attending) illustrates that there is no particular concentration of children with SEN in any one area of the borough. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that a disproportionate number of families from more deprived areas would be affected.

The full results of the consultation with parents/carers are set out in Appendix B. These give BME data relating to those who participated in the consultation, and should be broadly representative of all those potentially affected.

### **CONSULTATION**

- 4. What consultation have you carried out with individuals and groups who are likely to be affected by the proposal, including those with protected characteristics or other socio-economic disadvantage? Will you be carrying out further consultation in order to assess the equalities impact of the proposal? How are the results of consultation being used to influence decisions on the proposal?**

#### **4 (a) Staff**

From the outset, managers from PTS have been involved in all project meetings and have been instrumental in designing the proposals being put forward and are aware of the impact they may have on staff. It was not deemed necessary to have any formal consultation with PTS staff to date, as any changes to staffing requirements will happen gradually and can be managed through natural turnover and retirement. However, due HR process will be followed at the appropriate time.

It should be noted that in an agreement between PTS and Commissioning, notice of one full academic term (plus school holidays) is to be given to PTS of any proposed reduction or merger of routes. This is to allow PTS time to adapt to changes in demand for vehicles, drivers and escorts, where appropriate.

#### **4 (b) Community**

A full consultation has been undertaken to obtain feedback on proposals from the following groups:

##### Parents/carers

A questionnaire was issued to parents and carers of all children with SEN currently using the bespoke bus and taxi services provided by the Council, as well as those of known potential users. A small number of families whose children travel on the same buses but do not have SEN were

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included. The option of individual appointments to discuss the proposals in person was also offered and taken up by many.

### Children with SEN

A pictorial questionnaire was completed in school time by children at Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools to obtain their views about their current journeys and how they would like to travel to school (although it is accepted that for some, what they would like to do and what they are capable of doing may not be the same). Specific additional consultation of children at Ravensbourne, the Borough's other special school, was considered but deemed unnecessary as the proposed changes were very unlikely to impact the travel arrangements of these children, the majority of whom have complex needs and/or profound disabilities.

### 16+

A questionnaire was completed in college time by students at the Quarles campus of Havering College who currently travel to and from college by PTS bus. Questions were similar to those in the pictorial questionnaire used at the special schools.

### Schools

A copy of the consultation questionnaire which parents received was sent to head teachers at mainstream and special schools attended by children using the Council's bus and taxi provision, so that any comments could be provided on behalf of the school.

### Head Teachers of the Borough's special schools

Close consultation has taken place with the head teachers of the Borough's three special schools from the outset, prior to and during the formal consultation process.

### VSOs and Parents' Groups

- The following local voluntary sector organisations were contacted about the consultation, given a copy of the questionnaire and were invited to submit any comments on behalf of their organisation:
  - PACT (Parents of Autistic Children Together)
  - RAGS (Romford Autistic Group Support)
  - Crossroads
  - Add+Up (Attention Deficit Disorders + Uniting Parents)
  - First Step
- Full details of the consultation were also provided to HavCo for circulation to their contact list in order to encourage participation in the process.
- Representatives from the 'Positive Parents' group have been involved from the outset and have provided input into the content and form of the questionnaire which was sent out to parents. The project manager also attended a Positive Parents forum to answer questions and concerns which members of the group had relating to school travel assistance. Final results of the consultation were discussed with representatives from Positive Parents prior to final recommendations being considered by Cabinet.

### Results

Of the main consultation questionnaires sent out, the following numbers were returned:

121 of 385 sent to parents/carers (31.43%)

0 of 34 sent to schools and colleges

0 of 5 sent to VSOs

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65 pictorial questionnaires received from children at Corbets Tey School

45 pictorial or simple non-pictorial questionnaires received from children at Dycorts School

70 simple non-pictorial questionnaires received from students at Quarles campus of Havering College

A detailed analysis of the information gathered in the consultation with parents/carers and with children and young people is set out in Appendix B.

Overall, responses from the children and young people differed from those of their parents. Just over half of those currently on Council door-to-door transport said they would like to learn to travel independently in the future compared with two-thirds of parents who thought expansion of the travel training scheme was a good idea. Over half of the children at Corbets Tey and Dycorts liked the idea of safe meeting points whereas of the parents who responded, one-third was in favour of this.

Responses also varied quite significantly between the two schools and the college, which may be for the following reasons:

- Those at Quarles campus of Havering College represent a different age group (over 16).
- Over 70% of children who receive transport to Corbets Tey wanted to learn to travel on their own in the future: this high number may be partly due to the fact that children at Dycorts may have had more opportunity to be travel trained. This is due in no small part to the lack of pedestrian access to Corbets Tey school, possible solutions to which are being explored.

### Changes to proposals as a result of consultation

As a direct result of the consultation responses, one-to-one meetings with parents and the detailed equality analysis, proposals for the reintroduction of safe meeting points were revised. The use of a voluntary sector organisation to carry out independent assessments was investigated in respect of those children who currently travel to Corbets Tey and Dycorts schools on the door-to-door bus service. Each child would be assessed individually prior to the implementation of safe meeting points to ascertain whether this would be appropriate, and if not, an alternative suitable travel solution would be offered. This would alleviate serious reservations highlighted by parents in the consultation about the Council's ability to assess a child's travel requirements solely on the grounds of individual need as this would remove any potential conflict of interest or budgetary pressures for officers: such voluntary organisations exist to promote the best interests of children with special needs and would not benefit in any way from recommending travel solutions which were not appropriate. The voluntary sector organisation will be involved in selecting the actual meeting points.

For the same reasons, it is anticipated that travel training and assessments for suitability for travel training are also carried out by the voluntary sector which will reassure parents that the needs of their child are the primary concern and are considered individually and independently.

### **LIKELY IMPACT**

- 5. Based on the above information and consultation, what will be the likely impact of the proposal on individuals and groups with protected characteristics or other socio-economic disadvantage?**

#### **5 (a) Staff**

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No significant or disproportionate impact. Normal HR procedures will be followed if potential reductions in routes are required.

### **5 (b) Community**

Whichever proposals are adopted, the Council will still meet its legal duty to provide free and suitable assistance in getting to school or college for children whose SEN mean they could not reasonably be expected to walk to school. What *is* likely to change for some is the method by which those children and young people travel to their place of education.

For many of these children, the process of change itself can be stressful due to their specific behavioural problems. Parents are also likely to have concerns and worries about any change to the status quo. However, proposals such as the expansion of the travel training scheme (although not suitable for all) have been shown to have an extremely positive impact on children's independence and confidence, as well as long-term benefits such as improved employment prospects and social life.

Any change to be implemented will be based on an individual assessment of need, ensuring the proposed solution is reasonable and takes into account the child's or young person's exact needs.

### **PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION**

**6. How will you ensure that the proposal minimises the potential for discrimination against, or disproportionate impact upon, individuals and groups with protected characteristics or other socio-economic disadvantage? How can any disproportionate impact be justified?**

#### **6 (a) Staff**

Not applicable.

#### **6 (b) Community**

By the nature of the policy and practice under review, those affected will be children and young people with special educational needs, and their families. Therefore, there will be a disproportionate impact on these groups. However, any changes will be based on up to date assessments, which may be carried out independently by the voluntary sector, as appropriate.

The intended purpose of the project is not to discriminate against these groups but to create a more efficient service which aims (where appropriate) to promote independence, not just in relation their journeys to and from school or college but in the long-term as an enabling process for the future, giving increased freedom and quality of life while developing social skills and self-confidence.

For those individuals whose needs or disability are prohibitive to independence training, the Council remains committed to making suitable arrangements for them to get to and from school.

### **PROMOTING EQUALITY**

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- 7. How will the proposal help the Council fulfil its legal duty to advance equality of opportunities, and reduce inequality of outcomes due to socio-economic disadvantage, in the way Council services are provided?**

**7 (a) Staff**

Not applicable.

**7 (b) Community**

Those potentially affected by the proposals are, by virtue of their special needs, currently provided with travel assistance in a different manner from children without SEN. By actively encouraging independence and providing travel training for children who are able, the Council aims to offer these children with SEN the same freedoms and opportunities which their peers in mainstream schools have.

### **SPECIFIC NEEDS**

- 8. What steps will be taken to ensure that the specific needs of individuals and groups with protected characteristics or other socio-economic disadvantage will continue to be met following implementation of the proposal?**

**8 (a) Staff**

Not applicable.

**8 (b) Community**

The Council will continue to consider the specific needs of each child with SEN. Travel assistance will be reviewed each year and the broader annual statement reviews will continue to take a holistic look at each child's situation, including mobility.

### **MONITORING**

- 9. Once implemented, how do you intend to monitor the actual impact of the proposal upon individuals and groups with protected characteristics or other socio-economic disadvantage?**

**9 (a) Staff**

PTS will continue to review staffing arrangements and adapt as necessary.

**9 (b) Community**

- Service users' circumstances and eligibility for travel assistance will be reviewed annually.
- SEN reviews will continue to take place each year.
- Close liaison with Positive Parents and other groups will continue to provide feedback from affected users and their families.
- A detailed database will be maintained to track the travel assistance or training given to each child.

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- Monitoring will be ongoing until 2014 to see the impact on the number of service users and the mode of assistance they receive.
- Any complaints or issues arising from the change in policy will need to be recorded, reviewed and escalated where appropriate.

**SENIOR MANAGER**

**Name:           JOE COOGAN**

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "J. T. Coogan" followed by a horizontal line.

**Date:            2 JUNE 2011**