

School and College Travel Assistance

Consultation on policy changes in relation to pupils/students with Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Labour Group : 8 September 2014

What is School and Travel Assistance?

- All Local Authorities are obliged to offer school travel assistance for 5-16 year olds
- DfE publish statutory guidance (revised Summer 2014)
- Based on nearest school and distances from home – school
- We have already reduced mainstream assistance
- We provide no support for mainstream post 16 pupils nor for mainstream pre-school

Recent History

- Mainstream school travel policy reviewed (to statutory minimum) and changes implemented in September 2012
- Working towards concept of travel assistance not necessarily transport
- ImPOWER work in 2011-13 – inc. voluntary move to arranging own transport – saved £300k per year
- This proposal links to People Directorate priorities around supporting people to do more for themselves
- Part of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Fundamental service review

Current position

- Approximately 1,000 pupils are entitled to some form of SEND travel assistance
- Most in special schools
- £3.4m spent on school transport in 2013/14:
 - £0.2m SEN pupils attending mainstream schools
 - £3.1m Special (including early years, pregnant schoolgirls unit as well as special schools including post 16 pupils in FE and Special Schools)
 - £0.1m post 16 (Students in Further Education)
- Unlike a number of other LAs, current policy is more generous than statutory minimum. Current travel assistance includes:
 - Personal transport budgets
 - Bus passes
 - In-house minibuses
 - Contracted buses / taxis

Numbers of SEND pupils entitled to assistance

Type of provision	Numbers currently entitled to travel assistance
Special	740
Mainstream	25
Mainstream (enhanced resource unit)	60
Early Years	60
Post 16	130

Work to reduce costs within the current policy

- SEND Fundamental Service Review target of £1m for 2015/16 from ABC programme
- Savings of £0.5m in 2013/14 achieved
- Target of £1m for 2014/15 underway
- Travel assistance savings have already been made through:
 - Promotion of independent travel training
 - Personal transport budgets
- Already considering in year savings to be delivered through alternative delivery models
 - Shuttle buses
 - Not door to door drop offs

Proposal for Further Change

- Application of existing policy will not go far enough.
- Exhausted voluntary savings (ImPOWER work)
- Policy change required to deliver this (to statutory minimum):

Current	Change	Future
Separate mainstream and SEND travel assistance policies	Aligning the policies	One policy
Different distance criteria for eligibility	Use same distance criteria	Eligibility automatic over 2 miles for up to 8 years, over 3 miles for over 8 years
SEND early years pupils eligible for transport. No mainstream early years transport provided	Align eligibility to statutory requirements	No early years transport or travel assistance provided
SEND post 16 transport provided free of charge, no transport for mainstream post 16	Align policies	No automatic eligibility post 16, those eligible will be charged the cost of a bus pass

Positive aspects of this proposal and impact mitigation

- Additional resource for independent travel training
- Promoting independence early and for later life
- Equity and fairness
- Opportunity for all SEND to be assessed to get travel assistance should they need it
- Formal appeal process to be introduced

Impacts

Type of pupil	Change	Estimated Impact (at 50% of cohort)	Potential savings (full year)
All Pupils living under 1 mile from school	No change	No change	£0
Pupils living between 1-2 miles of school and aged under 8 years	No automatic eligibility	35 pupils affected	£30k
Pupils living 2 or more miles from school and aged under 8 (or those over 8 living over 3 miles from school)	No change	No change	£0
Pupils living 1-3 miles and aged over 8	No automatic eligibility	110 pupils	£130k
Pre-school / early years	Cease transport entirely	60 children affected	£70k
Post 16 pupils with SEND attending school	Cease assistance except for pupils with severe learning disabilities	40 pupils no longer eligible, 40 pupils to be charged for provision	£50k
Post 16 pupils with SEND attending college		25 pupils no longer eligible, 25 pupils to be charged for provision	£120k
Introduce charging towards cost of all post 16 travel assistance	Charging	60 pupils (accounted for in post 16 above)	£20k
Total		270 / 65 charged	£420k

Implementing the Policy Change

- Must consult for 28 school days
- Consult 13 October – 30 November 2014
- Consultation events at special schools, a college and a City Centre location
- Online questionnaire
- Meet with SEND forum
- School Councils to input where possible
- Cabinet approval required prior to implementation

Recommendations to Labour Group

- That consultation on proposed changes to the school and college travel assistance policy in relation to pupils with SEND is progressed subject to Cabinet Member approval.
- That a further report comes to Labour Group in February 2015 with the outcomes of the consultation with a view to implementing from September 2015.