



---

**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**  
**Date: Thursday, 30th November, 2017**

**Subject: Implementation update, home to school/college travel assistance**

---

**1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To report on the progress of implementation, of the Council's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy (Statutory School Age) and Post 16 Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- 1) Consider and note the content of the briefing note
  - 2) Identify any further recommendations for the Cabinet Member.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 Following a three month consultation period that ran between November 2016 and January 2017, the Council published a new home to school travel assistance policy for pupils of statutory school age and a Post 16 home to school/college travel assistance policy. (Appendices A, B and C)
- 3.2 The policies came into force in April 2017 for new applicants to the system and were applied to existing applicants with effect 1<sup>st</sup> September 2017
- 3.3 It is noted that on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the Government revised the statutory guidance 'Transport to education and training for people aged 16 to 18' which was originally published in 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training> It is confirmed that the Council's post 16 policy, remains fully compliant against the statutory provisions.

**4 Implementation Update**

- 4.1 The Council received the bulk of applications in respect of children and young people with SEN in July and August 2017. It was evident that the new process was labour intensive and the decision making process in relation to entitlement was complex. The following tables set out the volume of demand by age range and provide a breakdown of the appeals process and outcomes.

Table 1: Applications received by phase:

<b>Applications received</b>	
Pre-school	1
Statutory school age	801
Post 16	161
<b>Total</b>	<b>963</b>

Table 2: Initial decision – entitlement:

<b>Decisions</b>	<b>Agreed</b>	<b>Refused</b>
Pre-school	0	1
Statutory school age	735	66
Post 16	95	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>133</b>

Table 3: Stage 1 appeal, outcome:

<b>Appeals submitted at Stage 1</b>		<b>Appeal dismissed (unsuccessful)</b>	<b>Appeal upheld (successful)</b>
Pre-school	0		
Statutory school age	50	28	22
Post 16	25	20	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>26</b>

Table 4: Stage 2 appeal, outcome:

<b>Appeals received at Stage 2</b>		<b>Appeal dismissed (unsuccessful)</b>	<b>Appeal upheld (successful)</b>
Pre-school	0		
Statutory school age	12	6	6
Post 16	8	4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>

- 4.2 Many applicants met the eligibility criteria on the basis of distance. In these cases, SEN criteria did not need to be applied and the applications were processed quickly. The application of entitlement on the grounds of SEN for children of statutory school age, was relatively easy to apply and most of these applications were processed quickly. Post 16 applications proved more problematic to process, because there is no automatic duty on the LA to make arrangements. Judgement therefore had to be applied on whether a young person could reasonably make independent arrangements to travel to school or college. This was particularly difficult when a student or their parent/carer declared that they had access to a car and a driver, but were seeking reimbursement for the cost of fuel.
- 4.3 During the process and taking into account ongoing parental feedback, it was evident that the application form and supporting guidance had led to confusion for some families. Consequently, occasion insufficient information was provided to support a decision. However, these cases were reconsidered in the light of additional information through the appeals process
- 4.4 The application of the exceptional circumstance criteria has proved effective in identifying those families who require assistance, because of their unique circumstances but do not necessarily meet the standard eligibility criteria.
- 4.5 School leaders have highlighted any students that they believe require assistance because of special circumstances where exceptional criteria can be applied but the family may not be able to confidently articulate their position. This has enabled the LA to reach the most vulnerable children.

## **5 Learning and System Improvement**

5.1 Following application of the process, learning and feedback has led to the following actions for improvement:

- The application deadline for 2018/19 will be brought forward to ensure that applicants receive a decision before the end of the current academic year
- The application form will be revised, to assist applicants in providing all necessary information to inform the eligibility decision making process. This will be tested with the assistance of parents before launch to ensure that it is easy to understand and as simple as possible to complete
- The application form will enable post 16 applicants to provide evidence of low-income eligibility where required, at the point of application. This will ensure that contributions towards the cost of transport are assessed accurately at the point of first application thereby avoiding the need to appeal
- The current Travel Assistance policies will be supported with an easy to follow parent/young person guide. The draft guide will be reviewed with and by parents to ensure that it provides all of the information necessary before publication.

## **6 Summary**

6.1 It is acknowledged that a minority of parents remain dissatisfied with the travel assistance policies because they object to:

- An equalisation of the mileage reimbursement rate to 45p per mile, where this has resulted in a loss of income, compared to the personal travel budget rate paid in the 2016/17 academic years
- Payment of the post 16 contributory fee of £600 per annum, which is halved to £300 if low-income is evidenced.

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 Report to Cabinet 7<sup>th</sup> January 2017: Education Travel Assistance – outcome of public consultation

7.2 SEN Home to School Travel Assistance Policy 2017

7.3 SEN Post 16 Home to School Travel Assistance Policy 2017

**Name: Jeannette Essex**

**Job Title: Head SEND and Specialist Services**

**Contact Details: Email [jeannete.essex@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:jeannete.essex@coventry.gov.uk) Tel: 02476 832715**