



To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
Date: Thursday, 29th November, 2018

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

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To report on the impact of learning and system improvements, to the administration of the Council's Home to School Travel Assistance Policy (Statutory School Age) and Post 16 Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy, following its introduction in September 2017, as set out in the Education and Scrutiny Board minutes of the 30th November 2017

2 Recommendations

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

3 Background

- 3.1 The Council introduced a new Home to School Travel Assistance Policy (Statutory School Age) and Post 16 Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy in September 2017. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2), in its meeting of the 30th November 2017, examined the implementation process and took evidence from parents on their personal experience of the system. It was determined that the Board would re-examine the progress and impact of proposed actions to improve the customer experience.

4 Learning and System Improvement

- 4.1.1 Following application of the process in 2017/18, the reflective learning and feedback from parents, identified four key actions that would improve the service and customer experience. These were implemented in preparation for the 2018/19 academic year
- 4.1.2 **Action one:** The application deadline for 2018/19 to be brought forward to ensure that applicants receive a decision before the end of the 2017/18 academic year
- 4.2 **Outcome:** All 600 applications received by the published deadline of the 25th June 2018, were processed before the end of the 2017/18 academic year: 575 were judged eligible, 25 did not meet the criteria on the basis of the information provided. Schools were consulted on any applicant that did not meet the eligibility criteria, to ascertain if there was any exceptional circumstances that needed to be considered before a decision was communicated to families. Officers took steps to ensure that parents were aware of the deadline for applications and systems were put into place to monitor responses. Strategies included personal phone-calls to families that had missed the deadline. Late applications were typically processed within three days of receipt. Consequently, the decision making process was strengthened by better information, thereby reducing the number of appeals and the inherent stress that places on families. It is evident that customer satisfaction with the administration process in this area has much improved.

4.2.1 **Action two:** The application form would be revised, to assist applicants in providing all necessary information to inform the eligibility decision making process. This would be tested with the assistance of parents before launch, to ensure that it is easy to understand and as simple as possible to complete

Outcome: The application was revised and two consultation events were held to engage parents in the process of co-production. The events were promoted through the parent Facebook pages and One Voice. Whilst attendance at the events attracted minimal interest, the contribution made by parents proved invaluable and their advice was fully incorporated into the revised on-line application form

4.2.2 **Action three:** 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 is assessed accurately at the point of first application thereby avoiding the need to appeal

Outcome: The application form for post 16 to 18 travel assistance has been separated from the statutory school age application process. The form provides a specific section to declare low-income against the criteria. The effectiveness of the form is reflected in the significant reduction in appeals from: 25 in 2017, to 4 in 2018 (a reduction of 84%)

4.2.3 **Action four:** 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.

Outcome: The information provided on the Council's website has been significantly improved to assist all users. A booklet has been designed, which incorporates illustrations provided by pupils from Sherbourne Fields School. This has since been reviewed and is in the process of graphic decision before being published on the Local Offer and CHYP Shop websites.

4.3 **Evidence of Impact:** The following tables provide a comparison of activity in respect of the 2018/19 academic year and the 2017/18 academic year. In summary it is evident that the number of children and young people receiving travel assistance has increased by 10% and the number of appeals has reduced by 37%

Table 1: Initial decision – entitlement:

Decisions	2017 Agreed	2018 Agreed	2017 Refused	2018 Refused
Statutory school age	735	810	66	37
Post 16	95	104	66	8
Total	830	914	133	45
*Post 19	0	7	0	30

Table 2: Stage 1 appeal, outcome:

Appeals submitted at Stage 1	Total 2017	Total 2018	Appeal dismissed 2017	Appeal dismissed 2018	Appeal upheld 2017	Appeal upheld 2018
Statutory school age	50	14	28	10	22	4
Post 16	25	4	20	1	4	3
Total	75	28	48	13	26	7

Table 3: Stage 2 appeal, outcome:

Appeals submitted at Stage 2	Total 2017	Total 2018	Appeal dismissed 2017	Appeal dismissed 2018	Appeal upheld 2017	Appeal upheld 2018
Statutory school age	12	6	6	6	6	0
Post 16	8	1	4	1	4	0
Total	20	7	10	7	10	0

- 4.4 It is noted that the application of the exceptional circumstance criteria continues to be effective in identifying those families who require assistance, because of their unique circumstances but do not necessarily meet the standard eligibility criteria.

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