

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 29 March 2016
Report for: Decision
Report of: Leader of the Council

Report Title

Children, Families and Wellbeing All Age Travel Assistance Policy 2016/17

Summary

This Report sets out an approach to providing travel assistance for children and adults that reflects the Reshaping Trafford principles and the continued integration of services across an All Age continuum.

It contains key intentions for smarter ways of working to improve the efficiency of social transport services, for example, streamlined application processes, and more transparent decision making.

It is accompanied by the new All Age Travel Assistance Policy which has taken account of the findings of the independent consultation exercise conducted between November 2015 and February 2016.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Executive notes the Report.
2. That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1st June 2016.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Jill Colbert
Extension: 1901

Background Papers: Trafford Council All Age Travel Assistance Policy
TCC Trafford Council 2016/17 Budget Consultation: *the future of travel assistance for children, young people and adults*
Equality Impact Assessment and supporting data
EIA School Data Appendix A
TA for Schools 2015 Appendix B
TA for Adults 2015-16 Appendix C

Implications:

Relationship to Policy Framework/Corporate Priorities	Services focussed on the most vulnerable people Re-shaping Trafford Council
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Financial	<p>The Council spends a minimum of £3.2 million per year on transport and travel assistance. The original budget proposals for 2016/17 included for savings of £100,000 although in the final budget report this was reduced to £30,000 to assist with any changes to the policy following consultation.</p> <p>The proposals in the report will generate some additional income:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Post-16 pupils who require travel assistance will be subject to an charge of £200 per term (£100 for low income families) ➤ Adults with care and support needs who are assessed as requiring travel assistance will be subject to a charge of £2.50 per journey, an increase of 0.50p per journey. <p>At this stage it is unlikely that the savings target will be achieved and updates will be included in future CFW budget monitoring reports.</p>
Legal Implications:	To ensure the Council adheres to its legal obligations in relation to home to school transport, disabled children, adult learners and adults with care and support.
Equality/Diversity Implications	<p>Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</p> <p>In line with the council's PSED under section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out and is provided as part of the background papers to this report. The development of the EIA has enabled the Council to give due regard to the impact of the proposed changes on those identified with protected characteristics under the 2010 Equality Act. Members must have regard to the EIA, the likely impact of the proposed policy on persons with protected characteristics and the mitigation proposed in relation to those impacts in reaching their decision on this matter.</p>
Sustainability Implications	The Council will have to continue to procure transport providers to transport children across the Borough, and that number is likely to increase. A range of travel options are highlighted in the Policy. The Policy links to the Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy.
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	The number of Passenger Assistants required is dependent upon a number of factors including needs of pupils on commissioned transport.
Risk Management Implications	These are addressed in the Policy and the EIA.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Travel assistance enables eligible children and adults to access school, learning, training, respite

	care and activities which contribute to their employability, health and wellbeing.
Health and Safety Implications	These are addressed through the Service Standards described in the Policy.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. Trafford Council has been on a journey to reshape and transform services since 2010, which has resulted in significant improvements in service standards and effectiveness, as well as the achievement of challenging savings. During that time it has continued to receive endorsement to those high service standards, achieving for example, a 'Good with Outstanding Features' Ofsted outcome in 2014.
- 1.2. Through the Re-Shaping Trafford programme the Council has reduced inefficiency, identified smarter ways of working, bought things differently (a good example being social transport) and streamlined resource allocation processes. All of those projects have resulted in savings being achieved and improved the overall impact of services.
- 1.3. The integration of adult and children's health and social care services is a central pillar of that continued Reshaping programme and during December 2015 the Council consulted on a number of proposals to advance that integration. The development of a single approach to providing travel assistance to adults and children was one of those consultations, associated with the wider overall public consultation.
- 1.4. The public consultation was undertaken from 30th November 2015 to 2nd February 2016 by an independent organisation, The Campaign Company and their final Consultation Report is appended to this report. The consultation process is described in more detail in section 4.
- 1.5. The Council recognised that the existing policy was due for a refresh and exercised its statutory duty to review travel arrangement for service users; the new policy ensures that this obligation is met.
- 1.6. The final All Age Travel Assistance Policy addresses children, young people and adults' transport and travel assistance needs in a single document, providing an approach that addresses transition from early childhood through to older age for all residents with eligible needs. It introduces a range of travel assistance solutions that are available, and a clearer approach to managing applications and appeals.
- 1.7. The Council recognises that children, young people and adults with disabilities and additional needs can have diverse needs that span a wide spectrum and the policy offers a range of choices to enable them to develop or maintain independence, access choice and engage in activities of daily living. Independent Travel Training (ITT), for example, is a structured opportunity to achieve greater independence and has been promoted by successful parents and families who have seen their son or daughter graduate.
- 1.9. The new policy will apply to children of compulsory school age, pre-school children, children starting reception class, pupils attending grammar school or faith schools, young people of sixth form age, adult learners and adults with care and support needs. The policy is therefore not solely addressed to children and adults with disabilities, but is a wider document pertinent to all relevant groups.

2.0 The Policy Summarised

- 2.1 This section summarises the key features of the policy and reflects the changes that have been made to the original draft policy consulted on from November 2015 to February 2016; the full policy is appended to this report for reference.
- 2.2 The Council will provide travel assistance when a child starts school in reception class in the September of the academic year in which they are five; provided they meet the eligibility criteria for a primary pupil of compulsory school age. This removes the ambiguity of when a child is eligible for travel assistance in relation to compulsory school attendance.
- 2.3 The Council retains its discretionary power to provide travel assistance for children attending a relevant early years placement if there is a demonstrable medical or social need supported by robust professional evidence and agreed pursuant to an application process.
- 2.4 The Council will provide travel assistance to pupils attending the nearest grammar for which they are eligible. A grammar school will not be classed as eligible if the child is unable to gain a place due to the entrance requirements of the school or lack of availability of places.
- 2.5 Recognising that an increased mileage rate would encourage more parents to use their car or mobility vehicle to take their child to school, and that parents have welcomed the flexibility that a mileage payment gives them, the Council will increase the mileage rate from 20p per mile to 45p per mile. An increase in take up for a personal payment will result in a corresponding reduction in the number of children accessing Council commissioned transport, which brings a net all-round benefit.
- 2.6 A comprehensive electronic application system will be the main route for applications, although allowances will be made by exception for supporting evidence to be provided manually. The use of electronic application systems supports the Council's drive to make the most efficient use of its resources and it allows service users to access information and systems at a time that is convenient to them.
- 2.7 The Council will consider one alternative address to that of an eligible child's home address, provided that alternative address is not further in distance than the child's home to school journey on transport. This provides flexibility for parents/carers not resident at the same address or where there are multiple carers involved in a child's life.
- 2.8 The Council will offer to provide Passenger Assistants to escort people on public transport to develop their independence. This is one of a range of travel assistance solutions that aims to provide independent living skills that can be used to access other everyday activities. Any individual arrangement of this nature would be regularly reviewed to ensure it was supporting a service user to achieve their ambitions for independence.
- 2.10 The Council will not introduce mandated pick-up points instead of door to door transport for those who qualify for travel assistance.
- 2.11 The Council will exercise its discretionary power to use its power to provide travel assistance to 16-19 year old students in the circumstances set out in the policy

where this is necessary to facilitate a young person's participation in education and training.

- 2.12 Where there are no other travel assistance options available and the Council offers transport to facilitate 16 - 19 year olds participation in education and training a contribution will be required of £200 per term, or £100 per term for low income families.
- 2.13 Applications for Travel Assistance from adults who have an eligible social care need should be made once the assessment of need has been completed by the social care professional. This approach better separates out the assessment of need from the eligibility for travel assistance, and the travel assistance solutions available can then be explored based on the type of need presenting.
- 2.14 Where there are no other travel assistance options available to an adult, the Council may offer transport to enable their participation in education, or to access a valued occupation or activity; a contribution will be required of £2.50 per journey, an increase of 0.50p per journey.

3.0 Other Options

- 3.1 Do nothing.
The existing policies are separate and as a result require harmonisation to better address key transition points in life, for example the transition from childhood to adulthood. The existing Home to School Transport policy requires revision and to do nothing would expose the Council to risk as well as leave parents and carers unclear as to the Council's provision.
- 3.2 The Executive does not approve the recommendation. Confusion over the Council's Policy on travel assistance and transport arrangements may ensue as the Council has now widely consulted on the proposed changes. Any efficiency in streamlining processes, which accrues a benefit without any impact on service delivery, would be lost. A significant number of people responded to the consultation and they may feel that their views and feedback had not been taken in to consideration.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The '*Future of travel assistance for children, young people and adults*' consultation was framed around the new '*All Age Travel Assistance Policy*' and sought feedback on the following key areas:
- Perceptions of current transport services
 - Principles that should underpin any potential change
 - Funding and other elements of the travel assistance policy
 - Suitable alternatives for meeting travel assistance needs
- 4.2 A total of 242 responses were received through a variety of channels. These included on-line and hard copy surveys, emails, letters, parents' meetings at three special schools and feedback from the Council's budget consultation events in the Autumn 2015.
- 4.3.1 The full Consultation Report is attached and has been independently prepared and produced at every stage of the process.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 That the Executive notes the Report.

5.2 That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1st June 2016.

Key Decision Yes

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? Yes

Finance Officer Clearance (type in initials)...NB.....

Legal Officer Clearance (type in initials)...JLF.....



[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE (electronic)...

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To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Executive Member has cleared the report.