

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Executive Member for Children's Services  
**Date:** 18 May 2016  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Interim Corporate Director for Children, Families and Wellbeing

### 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 and the supplementary early years consultation undertaken in April 2016.

### Recommendation(s)

1. That the Executive Member for Children's Services notes the Report.
2. That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016.

### Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Jill Colbert  
Extension: 1901

Background Papers: None

The following documents are attached as appendices:

- Trafford Council All Age Travel Assistance Policy 2016-17 May 2016
- TCC Trafford Council 2016/17 Budget Consultation: *the future of travel assistance for children, young people and adults*
- EIA All Age Travel Policy Updated May 2106
  - 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
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 savings of £450k although in the final budget report this was reduced to £380k.</p> <p>Following the outcome of the public and early years' consultations it is estimated that the majority of the savings originally envisaged will not be realised due to changes to the original policy proposals. In particular relating to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Contribution from Post-16 students requiring transport has reduced from £3,800 p.a. to £600 p.a. or £300 p.a. for low income families</li><li>➤ Contribution from adults with care and support needs has reduced from £5,060 p.a. to £1,265 p.a.</li></ul> <p>It is estimated that the shortfall in the 2016/17 savings target will be £331k and the impact of this will be monitored and reported during the year as part of the overall budget monitoring. In the event that alternative in-year savings cannot be identified to offset this shortfall then the overspend may result in the use of the General Contingency which will increase the financial pressure for future years.</p> <p>The proposals in the report will generate some additional income:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Pre-school children aged 2-4 years old with an EHCP or is undergoing and EHCP assessment who require travel assistance will be subject to a charge of £200 per term (£100 for low income families)</li><li>➤ Post-16 pupils who require travel assistance will be subject to a charge of £200 per term (£100 for low income families)</li><li>➤ Post- 16 pupils in mainstream provision (without an EHCP) who require travel assistance on the basis of financial hardship will be subject to a charge of £100 per term</li></ul>

	<p>➤ 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>
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><b>Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)</b></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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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. As a result of feedback from the public consultation a supplementary early years consultation was undertaken from 11<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016.
- 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 and the supplementary early years consultation carried out in April 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 As a result of the early years consultation the Council has included provision for travel assistance for pre-school children aged 2 to 4 years old where such children

either have an EHCP or are undergoing an EHCP Assessment and are placed at a primary special school in Trafford. To be considered eligible for travel assistance there needs to be a demonstrable medical or social need for such assistance supported by robust professional evidence and eligibility will be considered pursuant to an application process.

- 2.4 Where there are no other travel assistance options available and the Council offers transport to facilitate pre-school age children aged 2 to 4 years old with an EHCP or undergoing an EHCP Assessment to access a place at a primary special school in Trafford pursuant to the proposed process a contribution will be required of £200 per term, or £100 per term for low income families.
- 2.5 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. This will avoid penalising children who attend a grammar school where the grammar school is not their eligible school or those for whom a grammar school would be their eligible school but they do not achieve a place at that school for the above reasons.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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 provide travel assistance to 16-19 year old students with an Education, Health and Care Plan 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 The Council will consider applications for travel assistance from students aged 16-19 years in mainstream provision without an Education, Health and Care Plan on the basis of financial hardship. Students must apply in the first instance to their school or college for bursary funding to assist with their travel costs. Where other such support is not available and travel assistance is provided on this basis a contribution of £100 per term will be required.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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.
- 2.16 The appeal process for children of compulsory school age has been made clearer and a new appeals process for pre-school children aged 2 to 4 years, students aged between 16 to 19 years and adult learners has been introduced.

### **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 of challenge as well as leave parents and carers unclear as to the Council's provision.
- 3.2 The Executive Member 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 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The All Age Travel Assistance Policy meets the Council's duties under the Education Act 1996 to make such school, college or other travel arrangements as they consider necessary for all children and persons of sixth form age and adult learners.
- 4.2 The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on the Council to assess the social care and support needs of children, young people and

adults and the new Policy sets out clearly what transport provision and assistance will be made by the Council.

- 4.3 The Policy aims to help people achieve maximum possible independence and at the same time to make reasonable and most efficient use of the Council's resources, in line with the Council's Sustainable Modes of Transport Policy.

## **5.0 Consultation**

- 5.1 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

- 5.2 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.

- 5.3 The full Consultation Report is attached and has been independently prepared and produced at every stage of the process.

- 5.4 An on-line supplementary early years consultation was carried out from 11<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016 asking for feedback about the proposal to introduce travel assistance for pre-school children aged 2 to 4 years with an Education, Health and Care Plan or undergoing an Assessment and is placed at a primary special school in Trafford.

- 5.5 Fifty-five responses were received and of those all but one agreed with the Council's proposal to introduce travel assistance for this group of children.

- 5.6 Nine respondents agreed that a charge should be levied although some commented that this should be a minimal or nominal charge.

- 5.7 Comments to the proposal were invited and these fall into the following themes:-

- 16 people objected to the principle of charging for transport
- 13 people felt that to exclude or charge this group of children would be unfair
- 10 people believed that the proposed charge was too high (it should be noted that the survey asked if a charge should be levied but did not propose the level of charge)
- 9 people commented that this group of children were unable to attend their local school and so should be provided with transport due to the distance they have to travel

## **6.0 Recommendation**

- 6.1 That the Executive Member for Children's Services notes the Report.

- 6.2 That the Policy is approved for implementation with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2016.

**Key Decision** Yes

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

**Finance Officer Clearance** *(type in initials)* GB

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

**CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE** *(electronic)*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JLF", is written above the signature line.

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