

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Executive
Date: 2 November 2020
Report for: Decision
Report of: Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Children's Social Care

Report Title

Approval to consult on the All Age Travel Assistance Policy 2021/22

Summary

This report describes the proposal to remove the discretionary criteria to provide travel assistance to pupils travelling to attend a grammar school, laying out the proposed consultation approach and timeline. This proposal does not change the extended rights to travel assistance for low income families who meet the criteria for a free school meal.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Executive notes the report including the proposed consultation approach.
2. That approval is granted to commence the consultation.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Sarah Butters
Extension: 3233

Background Papers: None

The following documents are attached: None

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	Ensuring a fair start for all children and young people Supporting our residents when they need it most.
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	GM Children and Young People's Plan GM Transport Strategy
Financial	The Council has forecast it will spend £4.524m in 2020/21 on transport and travel assistance. It is proposed the policy change would take effect in September 2021. The projected saving from this proposal is £30k in financial year 2021/22. This will increase to the full year projected saving of £45k in financial year 2022/23.
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 assessed care

	and support needs.
Equality/Diversity Implications	In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the 2010 Equality Act an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out to enable 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.
Sustainability Implications	The Council will have to continue to procure transport providers 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 and 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. Independent Travel Training is one travel assistance solution and helps young people prepare for adulthood and independence.
Health and Safety Implications	These are addressed through the Service Standards described in the Policy.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. Since implementation of the All Age Travel Assistance Policy in 2016/17, Trafford Council has made significant changes and service improvements to the provision of travel assistance to children, young people and adults.
- 1.2. The All Age Travel Assistance Policy covers home to school transport, post 16 learners, adult learners and vulnerable adults with assessed care and support needs. It is not solely for children and adults with disabilities, but is a wider document pertinent to all relevant groups.
- 1.3. The recently implemented 2020-21 policy included improvements to the layout and wording to make it more accessible. The content was coproduced by a group which included parent carer representatives, Trafford Family Information Service (FIS), Trafford Special Educational Needs Information and Advice Service (SENDIASS) and Trafford Parent Forum. Positive feedback has been received from families about this content since it went live online in June 2020.
- 1.4. The other key policy change in 2020-21 removed LA charges for the provision of transport to post 16 learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

linked to the Greater Manchester Our Pass pilot offering free transport for all 16 to 18 year olds.

- 1.5. Demand for travel assistance continues to rise. This mirrors the increase in the number of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who require an Education, Health and Care Plan. As a result of increased demand the budget for travel assistance, including home to school transport, was increased from £4.325m in 2019/2020 to £4.524m in 2020/21.
- 1.6. The Council has exercised its statutory duty to review the Policy for academic year 2021/22 including travel arrangements for service users, costs and charges, and eligibility to assistance.

2.0 Proposed Policy Change

- 2.1 One element of the council's All Age Travel Assistance Policy covers home to school transport. The local authority has to provide travel assistance to eligible pupils who meet the national criteria. This takes into account the distance travelled to school, family income, how safe the route is and whether a child has special educational needs or mobility issues.
- 2.2 In addition to providing travel assistance to eligible pupils meeting the national criteria, the Council has exercised its right to include discretionary criteria to support other groups of pupils.
- 2.3 There is one proposed policy change linked to the discretionary criterion for children travelling to access a grammar school place.
- 2.4 Within the Home to school travel and transport statutory guidance, the nearest qualifying school is the school nearest the child's home that has places available that provides education appropriate to the age and ability of the child, and any Special Educational Need that the child may have. If a parent chooses a more distant school, travel assistance will not be provided unless the extended rights apply. Extended rights are for families who meet the criteria for a free school meal because they are in receipt of a qualifying benefit.
- 2.5 Within Trafford's current policy, there is an additional discretionary criterion which provides travel assistance to children to attend the nearest grammar school for which they are eligible, even if it is not the nearest qualifying school as defined in the statutory guidance. A child is not classed as being eligible for a grammar school if they are not successful in the selection process. Travel assistance for pupils under this discretionary criteria is provided in the form of a travel pass for the bus and tram network.
- 2.6 The proposal is to remove this discretionary criteria for children who attend grammar school. This would mean if a parent chooses to travel further to access a grammar school place, they will have to pay for any travel costs themselves.
- 2.7 The cost to the council for each travel pass provided is £378. The cost to families for making their own travel arrangements will vary linked to individual routes from home to school. In many cases it will be less expensive than the £378 per year being paid by the council which is for a pass valid across the whole tram and bus network rather than being for a specific route.

- 2.8 This proposal would not affect low income families who meet the criteria to receive a free school meal as they would continue to receive assistance under a different part of the policy which gives extended rights to low income families.

3.0 Consultation Approach and Timeline

- 3.1 The consultation will be promoted through a range of digital and non-digital channels. The 120 families currently benefitting from this travel assistance will be written to. It will be promoted to all primary schools and grammar schools so they can encourage participation and feedback by all interested parties, including future grammar school pupils.
- 3.2 It will be promoted through the Trafford Council website, Trafford Directory website, social media channels, e-bulletins and in local community buildings such as libraries. It will also be included in wider Draft Budget Proposals consultation.
- 3.3 This is the proposed consultation timeline:

Monday 16 November 2020	Consultation start (30 working days in term time)
Sunday 10 January 2021	Consultation end
January 2021	Analysis of consultation feedback, final report and EIA prepared
February 2021	Report to Executive for final decision
31 May 2021	Policy published and effective for academic year 2021/22

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Demand for travel assistance continues to rise. This is primarily linked to the increase in the number of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who require an Education, Health and Care Plan. As a result of increased demand the budget for travel assistance, including home to school transport, was increased from £4.325m in 2019/2020 to £4.524m in 2020/21.
- 5.2 Travel assistance for grammar school children who meet the current discretionary criteria is provided in the form of a travel pass for use across the bus and tram network which costs the council £378 per pupil. On average, 120 travel passes are issued each school year to grammar school pupils. Therefore the projected full year saving from this proposal is £45k.
- 5.3 The proposed policy change would be effective from 1 September 2021 for academic year 2021/22. This means the projected saving from this proposal is £30k in financial year 2021/22, increasing to £45k in financial year 2022/23.
- 5.4 The cost to families for making their own travel arrangements will vary linked to individual routes from home to school. In many cases it will be less expensive than

the £378 per year being paid by the council which is for a pass valid across the whole tram and bus network rather than being for a specific route.

6.0 Other Options

6.1 Do nothing. The Council would not meet its statutory duty to review travel arrangements for service users, costs and charges, and eligibility to assistance and would lose the opportunity for making a saving.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendation

7.1 The revised policy will ensure the resource for travel assistance is targeted at those who need it the most.

Key Decision No

If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given? n/a

Finance Officer Clearance - AN

Legal Officer Clearance - JLF

CORPORATE DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE



Jill McGregor, Corporate Director of Children's Services

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