

Integrated Transport Unit

School Travel Assistance

- The Home to School Travel Assistance Policy is informed by the Education Act 1996 and additional duties required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- National guidance sets out the expectations of LA's regarding home to school travel and transport arrangements.
- Updated in June 2023 by DfE. In particular, the guidance sets out the circumstances in which the LA has a duty to provide or arrange free school transport or travel support for children of compulsory school age.
- Home to School Travel Assistance Policy updated this year and published ahead of the new academic year 2024/25..

Eligibility - Education

- The following eligible pupils who will be of compulsory school age during the current academic year:
 - a) A primary school age pupil attends their nearest suitable school and that is **over 2 miles** from the home address where the distance is determined by the Council and uses the shortest walking distance along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety;
 - b) b) A secondary school age pupil attends the nearest suitable school and that is **over 3 miles** from the home address, where the distance is determined by the Council and uses the shortest walking distance along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety;
 - c) A secondary school age pupil from a **low income family** and attends:
 - any one of their three nearest suitable schools and the school is between **2 and 6 miles** away from their home address, or
 - the nearest school preferred by their parents on the **grounds of religion** or belief and the school is between **2 and 15 miles** away from their home address.
- Eligibility criteria, application forms, FAQs and parent/carer information can be found on the Home to School web page. Education and Inspection Act (EIA) applications are submitted by the parent and / or carer of the student.

Eligibility -Education

- Transport requirements are considered as part of a full assessment of a student's special educational need. If a student is assessed as unable to walk the statutory distance to their nearest appropriate school because of their special educational needs or disability, even if accompanied by a responsible adult; the Council will provide travel assistance which is subject to a statutory assessment or subsequent annual review.
- Eligibility criteria, FAQs and parent/carer information can be found on the Home to School web page.
- Eligibility is assessed at the earliest opportunity. SEND student applications are initially raised during a SEND resource panel which links with a student's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), with a more detailed assessment carried out once a referral has been received by the transport team.

Types of Assistance - Education

- When considering any placement for a pupil, colleagues are reminded of the principle that:
It is the family's responsibility to take their own child to school.
- However, there are exceptional circumstances as to why a student who is not eligible may need travel support and these are assessed on an individual basis.
- Where a student is assessed as being eligible for support - a hierarchy of travel assistance is made and could be that the parent/carer is asked
How do you intend to get your child to school?
- Other offers may be:
 - Travel training, walking bus, use of existing resources where available.
 - 45p per mile as Parental Travel Allowance (PTA).
 - Transport for a limited period to give parents time to arrange their own transport with a refund of fuel or other costs to be made.
 - Full time transport up to Year 8 Assessment when the offer may be amended to meet the relevant needs of the student (if available).
 - Refund of bus fares or seat on a designated bus.
 - Other offers may include multiple modes of transport i.e. use of a bicycle in Spring/Summer terms and refund of bus fares to use on public bus services in the Winter months.

Permanently Excluded Pupils (PEX)

- Some students can be permanently excluded from a school or other education provider.
- The Council is required to secure alternative provision for them which may entitle the student to free transport or travel assistance to an approved alternative provider.
- Applications for travel assistance are assessed in accordance with the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy for mainstream and special schools if the student has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- It is expected that assistance will be on a temporary basis until such a time as the child is re-integrated into mainstream or special school and will be subject to review.

Service Delivery

- Combination of in-house and external suppliers and vehicles - Minibus, Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle, Taxi and Coach.
- Travel training inc. walking and use of public transport services.
- Payments to parents/carers.
- Journey Planning.
- Other support i.e. assistance / direct delivery in partnership with schools.
- During 2023/24 there were various types of travel assistance – equating to over **600,000 journeys.**

Adult Social Care

- No statutory duty to provide Adult Social Care Transport.
- However, adult support plans may need to describe how a person will be supported to attend a day care centre or setting.
- Support Plans are developed in line with requirements under The Care Act 2014.
- Draft Demand and Sufficiency Plans have highlighted a potential increase from 70 transports per day across 6 settings to approx. 610 across 160 settings.
 - This increased demand for transport support is not new to the authority but would be new to the Integrated Transport Unit and would be a significant increase in workstream tasks for the team.

Statistics

– Drivers:		29
– Passenger Assistants:		84
– Office Staff:		13
– Medical Carers (Private Sector)		4
– Training (Mandatory elements only)		2772
– Site and Field Based Risk Assessments:		72
– Individual Passenger Risk Assessments		210
– Contractors	137	
– Tendered Routes (estimated)		150

Demand Planning

- Sufficiency planning & transformation work continues with colleagues across all relevant departments in the Council to ensure that ITU is able to meet any increasing demand levels.
- This ensures;
 - Demand data from SEND/Education/Children's Services has undergone comprehensive QA process.
 - Transformation across the service is co-ordinated.
 - Policies and working practices are streamlined and robustly followed.
 - Eligibility is assessed at the earliest opportunity to aid continuity of all relevant services i.e. Education and Adult Social Care.
 - Capital and Revenue Investments can be made in timely manner.
 - MTFP projections are based on validated to ensure robust financial planning.

Challenges

- Increasing number of children with complex educational and medical needs with an EHCP aged between 5-25 in both Middlesbrough and out of area.
- Sufficiency of localised placements for both Mainstream and SEND.
- Evolving pressures within 2024/25 Budget of £6,644,770.
- Managing expectations.
- Managing a large workforce.
- Availability of Drivers with D1 entitlement.
- Availability of suppliers with vehicles in the private sector.
- Economic climate and increasing costs.
- Supply and maintenance of internal fleet.
- The Procurement Act – Implementation date of 28th October 2024.

Next Steps

- Commence delivery of 2024/25 service.
- Continuous engagement with all stakeholders to outline further improvements that can be achieved.
- Continue to build on successful relationship with Parents4Change forum.
- Develop and grow relationships with internal colleagues in People Services and Health.
- Engagement with other services to achieve their aims and co-production with service users and their families; developing confidence and reassurance in accessing the appropriate level of support and inclusion in the Travel Training Programme.
- Sufficiency planning – working continuously with colleagues across Education and Finance for demand planning; which influences the MTFP.
- Explore new methods of working such as further integration of ICT into the service or seeking invisible benefits for the student and school such as child welfare checks and improved attendance.

Any questions?