



Education and Skills Board
Thursday 24th November 2016

SEND Transport

Purpose of the report:

Surrey County Council (SCC) is spending more than it can afford on Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport and needs a brave and bold approach to addressing this complex priority. There are no easy options due to the sometimes challenging and complex needs of service users and relationships with stakeholders. This paper is to provide members with an overview of a new **SEND Transport Commissioning Programme**, designed to address the challenges the council is facing.

Introduction:

1. Children, Schools and Families Directorate has sought to improve the SEND transport offer as well as reduce the cost of providing this vital service. This complex system is to be the subject of a new SEND Transport Commissioning Project to achieve these two goals. A team of colleagues from across the council has been created to develop new models, solutions and process which will reduce cost and improve outcomes for children, families and schools.
2. SCC supports transport for approximately 2,920 children with SEND per year and spends nearly £27m providing this statutory service. It costs the council over £8,275 p.a. on average per child to provide this service, which is unsustainable in the current economic climate. The Council aims to save £4.2m per year by 2020/21 from the current SEND Transport budget.
3. The Children and Families Act 2014 has introduced major reforms to the way local authorities and their partners support children and young people with SEND. There have been previous attempts to reduce the spend on SEND transport but these have not delivered the savings required.
4. The Council's SEND transport offer is set out in two new policies agreed by Cabinet on the 24 May 2016. These policies outline the scope and

parameters of the Council's SEND transport offer across three age groups (Primary, Secondary and Post-16). The Council is required to have a robust, equitable and coherent transparent policy in line with Department for Education (DfE) Home to School Transport Statutory Guidance (July 2014) and the SEND Code of Practice 2014. These documents set out best practice expectations each Local Authority is required to meet. This includes a guideline for maximum travel times (45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for Secondary and Post-16), plus the provision of supporting escorts.

5. Area SEND Case Workers identify the level of need and nature of transport required. The Transport Co-ordination Centre (TCC) designs a route (ideally a combined route) that fits the 'specification' provided. Procurement supports the TCC to secure the best value through open tendering and new e-auction approaches.
6. The new SEND policy - 'Educational Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with SEND - Pre 16', has potentially raised parental expectations for 45-minute journey times for primary age children, although this is guidance and not always possible for nationally recognised reasons. The TCC report an increased budget risk for the 2016/17 school year due to the need to split and change routes.
7. Post-16 SEND transport is governed by a new policy for 2016/17 (Educational Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with SEND – Post-16), which sets out a requirement for parental contributions to be made towards the cost of transport. Presently this is £699.20 per year or £3.68 per day.
8. The current arrangement for procuring transport is by means of a Dynamic Purchasing System, which is managed by the TCC where currently over 100 Providers enter into mini competitions for specific routes. Recently there have been considerable savings (£500k on existing routes April – September 2016) through e-auctions held on routes where competition is high in the local area.

Future Commissioning Approach

9. To address the MTFP challenge and improve outcomes for children, young people and stakeholders Children Schools and Families working with other council departments is leading a new 'SEND Transport Commissioning Programme'. This is a combined and concerted effort across the council to redesign the current system and to assess, design and implement a new series of models for the future.
10. The new programme will review and where required redesign future policy, process and guidance to improve the effectiveness of the system and improve relationships with service users, parents/carers and schools.

11. The programme is planning a significant engagement programme to explain its work and to listen to the views, experiences, ideas and priorities from the following three groups:
 - a. Service users, parents, families and carers.
 - b. Current and potential future providers of SEND Transport.
 - c. Professionals, Schools and stakeholders.

The Directorate has conducted a wide breadth of engagement with Families on SEND services (non-transport related engagement) over the last 12 months. Families have asked us not to repeat the same conversations and so the SEND Transport Commissioning Programme will seek to build on previous discussions – ensuring a fresh and meaningful engagement process.

12. The SEND Transport Commissioning Programme will develop a detailed options appraisal for future provision and to pilot the best of these from April 2017. The new model will be ready for implementation from September 2017 – although it may take a further 12 months to be fully implemented due to the needs of children and young people being taken into consideration.
13. There is a work starting to improve the guidance and instructions for the SEND service on how the 'specification requirement' (nature and need for transport) is decide. The process in which decisions are made may result in low accountability for the overall budget spend (including overspend).
14. The council is adopting an outcomes based approach to the transformation of SEND Transport. This includes analysing existing data, developing options, piloting new models and implementing a new range of solutions designed to improve outcomes for service users and stakeholders.

Demand Growth

15. The growth in demand for SEND transport can be linked to the projected growth in EHCP's and population of Surrey with SEND. The SEND 2020 needs assessment projects a 16% increase in children with SEND entering the system. This equates to approximately 900 more children with EHCP's by 2025.
16. At the current average cost, this increase could potentially create a budget pressure of £4.5m p.a. This is based on the current take up of SEND transport (approx. 50%). The forecast growth in Education Health and Care Plans (up to the age of 25) makes the projected MTFP targets increasingly ambitious. To reduce the cost by 2021 and absorb the projected (medium prediction) growth in demand (300 more cases by 2021) requires a model that saves £7.2m pa by 2021 and beyond. There is an additional pressure where under the Education and Skills Act 2008, young people have been required, since June 2013, to stay in education or training for a further year after the compulsory school leaving age.

Other Local Authorities

17. Local Authorities across the country are wrestling with the same financial challenges and a range of options have been developed. These include clearer entitlement criteria, use of Community Transport providers and a variety of ways of re-organising system.
18. SCC, in comparison to other local authorities spends more on SEND transport per child/young person. When compared to Kent CC, who have approximately 100 more children and young people to transport, SCC's spend is 44% higher per person. On average SCC spent £8,275 p.a. verses Kent's spend of £4,738 p.a.
19. A key change for Post-16 children and young people is that the Council can ask for a contribution from the parent/carer towards the cost of providing transport. SCC introduced a £695.40pa parental/carer contribution. Other LA's have similar schemes ranging from £200-£600+pa.
20. It's key to note that comparing Surrey with other councils is a complex challenge. The nature of need, location of school sites, local capacity and location of specialist provision all have an impact on each councils costs.

Conclusions:

21. There is a requirement to work collaboratively with children, young people, schools, Family Voice and internal stakeholders to explore alternative ways of delivering a sustainable transport solution for SEND children and young people in Surrey within the financial envelope available.
22. The new SEND Transport Commissioning Programme aims to deliver up to £7.5m savings by 2021, whilst maintaining a solution that satisfies the requirements of all stakeholders.
23. The new programme work will report its work back to the SEND 2020 Programme Board and the Commissioning Overview Group to ensure consistent approaches, support and momentum is maintained.
24. The challenge in redesigning the SEND transport system is substantial. Previous efforts have been well-meaning but have not delivered the savings required in the MTFP. This is why a new joint approach is being adopted.
25. The programmes strapline is to take a 'bold and brave' approach. Only through being courageous and restorative will the programme be able to work with departments and stakeholders across Surrey to deliver the MTFP savings.

Suggested recommendations:

26. It is recommended that the members scrutinise the new SEND Transport Commissioning Project approach being taken and offers constructive feedback on key area of focus which the members would like to see explored.
27. It is recommended and endorsed that the council explore a range of alternative options for SEND transport to deliver the MTFP savings required.

Next steps:

28. The SEND Transport Commissioning Programme has started its work and will take time to draw together all the information and data needed to make sustainable progress.
29. The SEND Transport Commissioning Project has established a working group of officers and partners across this topic to co-ordinate and drive the programme forward to deliver the outcomes and MTFP savings.
30. The programme is considering implanting a SEND Transport Commissioning Board to provide both members and senior managers with a higher degree of governance and scrutiny of the SEND Transport Commissioning Programme.
31. A detailed options appraisal will be developed and tested. Key successful options will be piloted and developed further to examine their impact on service users and MTFP.

A series of engagement events will be held specifically for SEND transport with the following stakeholders to capture feedback as well as support and challenge for options and proposals:

- Existing transport providers
- Area SEND teams and TCC colleagues
- Parents, Schools and Families (with Family Voice)

Officers will conduct a review of the models being adopted by other LA's.

Report contact:

Leigh Middleton, Senior Manager Business Development, Commissioning and Prevention

Gabrielle Close, Interim Head of SEND Operations, CSF.
Robert Kitt, Senior Category Specialist, Procurement and Commissioning
Tracey Coventry, Transport Co-ordination Team Manager, Service Delivery

Contact details:

Leigh.middleton@surreycc.gov.uk 01483 519 412

Gabrielle.close@surreycc.gov.uk 01483 517 291

Robert.kitt@surreycc.gov.uk 020 8541 8658

Tracey.coventry@surreycc.gov.uk 020 8541 9592

Sources/background papers:

SEND Transport Commissioning Programme, September 2016