

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**DATE:** **28 NOVEMBER 2017**



**REPORT OF:** **MRS MARY LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION**

**MR MIKE GOODMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT**

**SUBJECT:** **NEW TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND CARE PLAN OR STATEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, 0-25 YEARS**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Following extensive consultation with families, Surrey County Council (SCC) is introducing a new Travel Assistance Policy for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), designed to better support them to get to school, college or placement through a broader, more flexible range of assistance options. The Council's existing policy provides limited flexibility to work with families to explore alternative arrangements that might better meet children and young people's needs, contributing to costs rising to almost £27m in 2016/17.

Building on the Council's decision to commission independent travel training for children and young people with SEND in October 2017, the new Travel Assistance Policy recognises that whilst some children and young people will continue to require door-to-door transport, many others could benefit from other, more sustainable options that enable them to travel successfully with their peers, family members, or independently, where appropriate, increasing their confidence and better preparing them for adulthood and independence.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet approve the proposed new 'Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Statement of Special Educational Needs (SSEN), 0-25 years';
2. authority be delegated the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Assistant Director Schools and Learning, to approve future changes to this policy as required;
3. Cabinet approve the set-up of a Task Group made up of the relevant Members and officers to monitor the progress and outcomes of this policy.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

This policy is required for the Council to meet its statutory duties for travel assistance to support eligible children and young people with an EHCP/SSEN to

access education and training. It also responds to the need for a more flexible and sustainable approach to SEND transport in Surrey, for the reasons outlined in this report.

#### **DETAILS:**

##### **Background information**

1. Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age (ages 5-16) are regularly attending school. Equally, local authorities in England have a legal duty to provide home to school transport assistance to children and young people who meet certain eligibility criteria, to support them to access education or training.
2. There is a strict legislative framework surrounding local authorities' duties in relation to home to school transport assistance which sets out the obligations and constraints that apply to councils in exercising their duties. For example, councils are required to publish their transport arrangements in the academic year prior to when they will come into effect, which means there is a longer lead-in time for any proposed changes to the service. Additionally, certain types of assistance, such as travel allowances, require parent/carer consent. Surrey County Council has to adhere to these duties and restrictions in implementing its new Travel Assistance Policy for children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)/Statement of Special Educational Needs (SSEN), and recognises the importance of working together with families in planning and delivering effective travel arrangements.
3. This new policy applies to children and young people with an EHCP/SSEN. Children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), but who do not have an EHCP/SSEN, may be eligible for travel assistance under the Council's general travel assistance policy, and this has been appropriately clarified and signposted to in the new Travel Assistance Policy for children and young people with an EHCP/SSEN.

##### **Current situation**

4. There are nearly 3000 SEND children and young people in Surrey who are currently assisted on their journey from home to school or college. The majority of these, approximately 2,800, are transported by taxi or minibus on a door-to-door basis, at an average cost of approximately £9.6k per pupil each year, and this level of spend is unsustainable. There is limited flexibility within the current policy to explore alternative and more cost-effective arrangements, including sharing transport arrangements with parents and carers. The Council's rigid and inflexible approach to SEND transport to date, with the door-to-door service being offered as the standard arrangement, has also contributed to a culture of entitlement in Surrey.
5. A series of engagement events held throughout this year highlighted that many parents and carers would like to transport their own children and young people to school or college, but that there are certain barriers that stand in the way. These include the lack of flexibility and support to share school/college runs with the Council, the need to care for or transport other children in the household to school, and insufficient support towards the cost of making their own transport arrangements. The new Travel Assistance Policy seeks to address these issues by introducing more flexibility and support for parents

and carers to work together with the Council in meeting the shared duty to ensure children and young people are accessing education, and asks the question:

"How are we planning to get your child or young person to school or college?"

6. The Council's 2017/18 budget for SEND transport is £25.5m, however an overspend of £1.2m is expected in the current financial year, due to the increasing number of children and young people becoming eligible for travel assistance, repeating the pattern seen in recent years. In order to maintain a sustainable service, the Council needs to achieve £7m savings from the overall SEND transport budget by 2021, included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This has been additionally informed by benchmarking research which indicates that Surrey spends significantly more on SEND transport than comparable local authorities, further confirming the need for change.
7. Managing this requires a different approach to how the Council plans, commissions and delivers transport for children and young people with SEND. For this reason, Surrey County Council is introducing a package of initiatives designed to make the system more flexible and efficient. This aims to transform the existing culture and practices within the Council, and among families, schools/colleges and transport providers, in order to meet the needs of the county's more vulnerable children and young people in the most effective way possible.
8. Underpinning these developments, the new Travel Assistance Policy for children and young people with an EHCP/SSEN signals a new, more collaborative way of working with parents and carers, and promotes independence for children and young people, where appropriate. This is strengthened and supported by the introduction of a wider, more flexible variety of assistance options better adapted to the meet the needs of the county's pupils as they develop and progress towards independence, reducing dependence on more costly transport assistance where this is not needed.
9. The Council's new policy will come into effect fully from September 2018, however parents, carers and young people will be able to opt into some of its new features within the current academic year.

## **Options**

10. In developing this policy, the following options have been considered for their potential to meet statutory requirements and positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND, whilst contributing to a sustainable transport budget:

### **Option One: Do nothing**

There would be no improvement or flexibility within the service, leading to transport costs rising beyond sustainable levels, potentially compromising the Council's ability to meet its statutory duties in future. There would also be no support for children and young people to develop essential independence skills in preparation for adulthood, contributing to ongoing dependence on public services in the long-term.

## **Option Two: Reduce service to statutory minimum**

Defining the statutory minimum for children and young people with SEND is challenging due to the complexity and diversity of their needs. For example, the Council might consider replicating the standard arrangements which apply for non-SEND children/young people and offer transport by bus or coach from a collection point. Whilst the Council recognises that this type of assistance could be appropriate and beneficial for some children and young people with SEND, and plans to explore this option where this is the case, this would need to take into account individual needs. A “statutory minimum” approach would be equally inflexible, and provides no additional support for families and young people to make their own transport arrangements, or for independent travel, which offers benefits to children and young people’s development and learning outcomes.

## **Option Three: Collaborative approach**

Pursuing a collaborative approach means that children and young people will be supported to get to school, college or placement through a variety of assistance options better adapted to their needs as they develop and progress. It also sets the expectation that families and young people will work together with the Council to identify the most suitable, cost-effective and sustainable travel assistance option for their child or young person.

Children and young people tend to travel best when transported by a family member or a trusted friend, and introducing more flexible options supports this. As they mature, travelling to school/college with their peers, or independently, builds confidence and prepares children and young people for adulthood, further education and employment. The collaborative approach also includes plans to pilot central collection points to support more children and young people living in the same area to travel to school or college together from a central location locally, where this is appropriate. Creating more options for families and young people encourages collaboration and reduces dependence on taxi or minibus transport, delivering savings and efficiencies in the long-term.

Any proposed changes to a door-to-door transport service will require a significant shift in existing culture and practice for the Council, parents and carers, and schools and colleges. Introducing a collaborative approach may result in initial enquiries and challenges, and parents and carers will have to consent to transporting their own children and young people supported by travel allowances. However, many parents and carers have communicated that they would like to transport their own children and young people to school or college, if the Council allowed for more flexibility, and the new Travel Assistance Policy aims to support this.

## **Preferred option: Collaborative approach**

Following consideration of the options above, and extensive consultation with families of SEND children and young people, the Council’s preferred strategy is to pursue a collaborative approach, and to work together with parents and carers to transform the culture and practices surrounding SEND transport. This includes offering a broader range of assistance options that will benefit children and young people in developing their independence, and provide more support to parents and carers to share this responsibility with the Council, where appropriate, whilst delivering savings to the public purse. By demonstrating a commitment to

working together with families, the Council aims to build a culture of trust and mutual respect, and puts the support mechanisms in place to enable a more cost-effective and sustainable system for the longer-term.

### **Proposed Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with an EHCP/SSEN, 0-25 years**

11. The Council's proposed new Travel Assistance Policy recognises that whilst door-to-door transport assistance will continue to be appropriate for some children and young people, many others will be able to benefit from alternative forms of assistance that support their development. It introduces clearer criteria for eligibility, and provides a holistic view of travel assistance, bringing together the guidance for compulsory school age children and young people in post 16 education and training with an EHCP/SSEN under one, simplified policy. Through the range of options, it creates a pathway towards independence, starting from council or parent/carer transport, towards group or independent travel, where appropriate.
12. The policy introduces a new way of working with parents and carers to ensure the most appropriate travel arrangements are in place, whilst ensuring responsible and effective use of public resources. What this means in practice is that, where reasonable, a taxi or minibus will no longer be the automatic default mode of assistance, and parents, carers and young people will be offered a range of options that the Council considers to be suitable for their child or young person's needs. This could include providing contracted transport for eligible children and young people, where this is appropriate. The new flexible arrangements have been designed to provide families and young people with more options, and have been developed in consultation with parents and carers. These are summarised in the table below.

<b>Assistance option</b>	<b>Benefits to children/young people and families</b>	<b>Impact on savings, and other benefits</b>
<b>Independent travel allowance</b> –more flexible and generous allowance scheme for families and young people. Families and young people can use this how they see fit to make their own arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/carers and young people given the freedom and flexibility to make their own transport arrangements.</li> <li>• Children/young people travel best when accompanied by a parent/carer, trusted relative or friend, arriving calmer and ready to learn.</li> <li>• Could be used towards leasing a vehicle.</li> </ul>	<p>Potentially up to £3.8m by 2020/21.</p> <p>This option could deliver significant savings and efficiencies, as the average cost per pupil in transport is halved with the allowance.</p> <p>The maximum allowance available based on distance from home to school is £5k per child/young person per year, in comparison to the average cost of £10k per child per year in taxi/minibus transport.</p>
<b>Independent travel training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children/young people have skills and confidence to travel</li> </ul>	£288k by 2020/21, and approximately £500k per year by 2022/23.

	<p>independently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children/young people are better prepared for adulthood and employment.</li> </ul>	<p>Savings and efficiencies as children/young people no longer require transport assistance.</p> <p>Reduced ongoing support costs as young people enter adulthood more independent.</p>
<b>Option to share school/college runs with the Council</b> (i.e. parents/carers transport on set days, and the Council covers the remainder)	<p>Children/young people tend to travel best when accompanied by a parent/carer, arriving at school/college calmer and ready to learn.</p>	<p>Contributes to overall cost reduction, maximising efficiency.</p> <p>Savings will be less where the child/young person was previously in a shared taxi/minibus, as this transport will continue for other children/young people. However, this sets the precedent for collaborative travel assistance.</p>
<b>Option for the Council to transport a family's mainstream child/young person</b> , so that parents/carers can transport their SEND child/young person where this is a more economic use of public money	<p>As above.</p> <p>Parents/carers enabled to build closer relationship with their SEND child/young person's school/college, and have better understanding of their child/young person's progress in education/training.</p>	<p>As above, contributes to overall cost reduction, especially where child/young person is a solo traveller.</p>
<b>Central collection points</b> (Children/young people travelling to school/college together on larger vehicles from safe, central pick-up/drop-off location)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children/young people start to build social and independence skills, raising their confidence.</li> <li>Opportunity for parents/carers to build relationships and local support networks.</li> </ul>	<p>More cost-efficient mode of transport for children/young people living in the same area and travelling to same school/college.</p> <p>The plan is to pilot this scheme prior to wide-scale roll-out, after which projected cost-savings will be available.</p>

### SEND Travel Assistance Team

13. To assist families and young people in navigating the Council's new arrangements, the Council is piloting a new SEND Travel Assistance Team made up four existing SEND caseworkers who have been allocated to this

project initially for six months, starting from October 2017. Together with the SEND service, the pilot team will be responsible for implementing and embedding the policy across the service, and will provide the dedicated SEND expertise to work with parents, carers and young people to identify the most suitable travel arrangements. The SEND Travel Assistance Team will be responsible for on-boarding families onto the new policy, starting with all newly eligible children and young people, once this policy has been approved. The ambition is for this new team to become the single point of contact for all SEND transport enquiries in future, improving families' experience of contacting the Council, and reducing pressure on casework teams. Consequently, on completion of the pilot, resource requirements will be considered in evaluating its success and planning for the future of the service.

14. The SEND Travel Assistance Team, together with the SEND service, will work with families and young people to review transport arrangements on an annual basis, or as and when appropriate, to ensure the type and level of assistance in place is accurate, fair and consistent with the child or young person's needs and circumstances as they progress through education. This will further contribute to savings where children or young people are no longer eligible, or do not require transport assistance to get to school or college, as their circumstances change. The overall impact of the new Travel Assistance Policy on savings within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is set out in the 'Financial Implications' section of this report.
15. By promoting and facilitating new ways of working with families and young people, and providing additional support for independence, the new Travel Assistance Policy lays the foundations for a new culture and flexible approach to travel assistance in Surrey. It supports and enables children and young people to access education and training through a range of options that benefit their development and independence, whilst contributing to the delivery of significant savings.

#### **CONSULTATION:**

16. There was a public consultation on the draft Travel Assistance Policy, which ran from 3 July until 29 September 2017. This was supported by a series of public engagement events and webinars, following on from initial engagement events held earlier this year, and an online survey which secured 33 responses. The feedback from the consultation and engagement has helped to inform and shape the final draft policy, and is summarised in the paragraphs below.
17. On balance, there was clear support for the new, flexible options (sharing school/college runs and the option to transport a family's mainstream child/young person), where this is possible for families, and for the new independent travel training offer, where children and young people are capable of undertaking this training.
18. There were some questions and concerns raised about how the Council's need to make savings in this area would impact on the support available for children and young people. In the policy, the Council has clearly outlined its statutory duties and commitment to ensure that all eligible children and young people are safe and supported to access education. The introduction of additional and more flexible assistance options aims to further support and enable this. The policy also commits the Council to work together with

parents and carers to identify the most appropriate and cost-effective assistance, and priority will always be given to a child or young person's needs. This will enable the Council to meet its statutory duties in relation to transport assistance, and its duties to ensure value for money services and to promote sustainable travel. These have now been set out more clearly in the policy.

19. There were also different views and expectations about the Council's and parents'/carers' respective duties in supporting children and young people to access education. In response, the Council's statutory duties have been more clearly set out in the policy, alongside its intention to encourage collaboration with parents and carers, where possible, recognising that certain travel arrangements, such as transport by parents/carers supported by a travel allowance, require parent/carer consent.
20. In addition, the following changes have been made to policy in response to the consultation:
  - The language and layout of the policy has been updated to make it clearer and easier to navigate; the Council's intention and rationale for the new policy, and the key features of the new policy have also been more clearly set out in the document.
  - For clarity, the title of the policy has been modified to apply to children/young people with an EHCP/SSEN. As raised by parents/carers in the consultation, children and young people with SEND, but without an EHCP/SSEN, may also be eligible for transport assistance. This has been appropriately acknowledged and signposted to in the updated policy.
  - More detail has been provided about eligibility and travel assistance available for post 16 students, including contracted transport arrangements. The Council has decided not to charge a contribution towards travel costs for eligible young people with an EHCP aged 16-18 in the 2018/19 academic year, subject to review, for the reasons sets out in the 'Equalities and Diversity' section of this report.
  - Parents and carers were supportive of the new travel training offer, but there were some concerns about the criteria and process for determining whether or not a child or young person was suitable for independent travel training. The policy has been updated to set out the criteria and process more clearly, and to provide assurance that this option would only be considered for children and young people capable of undertaking this training. The policy also explains how the Council will work together with parents and carers in this area.
  - The wording around maximum journey times has been brought in line with the statutory guidance, and the same maximum journey times will apply for children/young people travelling to and from collection points (and will be inclusive of the time it takes for a child/young person to travel to and from a collection point).
21. There was a general consensus of the need to work together with families to get the best results, and the Council has made this a clear commitment in its new policy.

22. A more detailed summary of the consultation responses will be made available to the Lead Member for Education and the Lead Member for Environment and Transport, and to all Members in the Members reading room, which Members should consider as part of their decision-making.

#### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

23. The following risks have been considered and mitigating actions being taken to address them.

<b>Risk type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Safeguarding	The Council is responsible for ensuring that children/young people are appropriately safeguarded on the journey from home to school/college.	<p>The Council already has robust safeguarding policies and checks in place for its contracted transport arrangements, and the same will apply when piloting central collection points.</p> <p>The Council's independent travel training provider and staff will be subject to rigorous checks, including enhanced level DBS.</p>
Financial	Parents/carers do not consent to Independent Travel Allowance where this is offered, resulting in low take up and under-achievement of savings.	<p>Scheme has been made more flexible and generous in response to feedback from parents/and carers, better supporting them to transport their own children/young people. The introduction of the other flexible options further enables this.</p> <p>Provide better information about the scheme to existing and new customers - a number of families have told the Council that they did not know about the previous scheme, and would have liked to access it.</p> <p>SEND Travel Assistance Team will provide the dedicated capacity and support to help parents/carers understand the benefits of the new scheme, encouraging take up where appropriate.</p>
Legal	Proposed changes to travel arrangements result in legal challenges.	The new policy has been reviewed against the relevant legislation and guidance to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

## **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

24. By introducing a variety of flexible assistance options, in addition to an independent travel training offer, the new Travel Assistance Policy provides the framework and support to move away from costly door-to-door taxi/minibus transport, to more sustainable modes of travel, where this is appropriate.
25. This will require a cultural shift among the Council, parents and carers, and education and training providers, and the level of savings achieved is dependent on the take up of the new options. The new SEND Travel Assistance Team, together with the SEND service, will play a crucial role in promoting and embedding the policy across the service, and work with families to effectively promote the Council's new policy and offer.
26. The introduction of an Independent Travel Allowance is expected to lead to savings of £3.8m per annum by 2020/21, assuming that 33% of children and young people are assisted in this way by that date, and the communications and resources are being put in place to support and enable this. Other options will be explored, such as central collection points, which could achieve additional savings.
27. The saving from independent travel training is based on 70 children and young people being trained each year from January 2018. Savings will accumulate once these children and young people start travelling independently for the remainder of their education. However, the ambition is to scale-up the independent travel training programme to train up to 500 children and young people over five years which will deliver additional savings.
28. The SEND Travel Assistance Team will review processes in line with the new policy. This is expected to yield savings, for example by introducing regular reviews ensuring travel assistance remains appropriate and relevant to children and young people's needs as they continue through education.
29. In addition to the savings linked to changes in policy, new approaches to procurement are expected to achieve savings, for example through making it easier for parents/carers to cancel transport, and by better managing the market for transport provision. These savings are estimated to be £1.5m by 2020/21, bringing the overall saving to £7m, in line with the savings included in the current MTFP. The impact of all initiatives will continue to be closely monitored to understand the impact on demand and costs.

30. The planned financial impact of the Travel Assistance Policy and other supporting changes is summarised in the table directly below:

<b>Saving as is forecast:</b>		<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Independent travel allowance	Incentivise more parents/carers to transport their own children/young people, where possible, through an enhanced travel allowance	(-200)	(-1,400)	(-2,600)	(-3,800)
Independent travel training	Train children/young people to travel to school independently, where appropriate	40	102	(-105)	(-288)
SEND Travel Assistance Team	On-board children and young people onto new policy, and ensure travel assistance is allocated accurately, fairly and consistently	(-200)	(-700)	(-1,200)	(-1,500)
Procurement Initiatives	Introducing new tools and technology to enable better contract management, and deliver savings and efficiencies	0	(-500)	(-1,000)	(-1,500)
<b>Total Savings:</b>		<b>(352)</b>	<b>(2,369)</b>	<b>(4,850)</b>	<b>(7,070)</b>

31. Savings will be delivered over a five year period as the policy becomes embedded within practice. The Council recognises that it will take time to build up confidence in the new offer among families, and therefore aims to create a supportive and flexible policy, and work closely together with parents and carers in implementing these changes to the service.

#### Section 151 Officer Commentary

32. This policy framework will enable the detailed new ways of working with families and children to be implemented around independent travel allowances, independent travel training and reviewing existing processes and practices. All of these will require dedicated resource, time and effort within the services, in order for the savings as outlined in this report to be realised.

#### Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

33. Local authorities must publish general arrangements and policies in respect of home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age, and arrangements to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training. This report sets out the arrangements the Council will put in place to meet its obligations.

34. There is a statutory requirement for consultation in this context as set out in the Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (July 2014) and Post 16 Transport to Education and Training Guidance (October 2017). A consultation was carried out as set out above, and a summary of responses has been provided in the report. All responses are available for inspection by Members (in the Members reading room).

35. In writing the policy, officers have taken into account the relevant legislation and guidance.

36. The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) applies to the decision to be made by Cabinet in this report. This means that there is a requirement when deciding upon the recommendations to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups, and eliminate any unlawful discrimination. These matters are dealt with in the Equalities and Diversity section of this report, and in the attached Equalities Impact Assessment. Members should note any potential negative impacts identified in the assessment and the mitigations set out in the Action Plan to address them, and take them into account in their decision-making.

#### **Equalities and Diversity**

37. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is available as an annex to this report. Positive impacts of the new policy are that children and young people with SEND will be better supported to access education and training through a variety of travel options more suited to their needs as they develop and progress. Additionally, independent travel training, or travel from a collection point, will support and enable children and young people to develop essential independence skills, better preparing them for transition to adulthood. Also, parents and carers will have more opportunities and flexibility to transport their own children or young people, and this will benefit children and young people with SEND who tend to travel better when accompanied by someone they know.
38. Potential negative impacts are that changes to routine travel arrangements could cause anxiety for some children and young people with SEND, potentially impacting on their learning outcomes. However, any changes to travel arrangements will be made together with the family or young person, and only appropriate options put forward that are relevant to the child or young person's needs. Parents and carers will also be encouraged and supported by the Council's SEND Travel Assistance Team to prepare their children/young people for changes in travel arrangements.
39. As a result of the Equality Impact Assessment, the Council has decided not to charge a contribution for eligible young people with EHCPs, aged 16-18, in the 2018/19 academic year. This is because the law requires travel arrangements for eligible adult learners (age 19-25) with an EHCP to be made free of charge, therefore introducing a contribution for the 16-18 age group creates inconsistency, and could cause confusion for families and young people.

#### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

40. A significant proportion of children and young people who are looked after in Surrey have special educational needs and disabilities. This policy will ensure that these children and young people have the same support and opportunities to access education and training as all other children and young people.

41. The policy will benefit looked after children and young people by offering them additional support in preparation for adulthood, including accessing further education and employment. The Council will consider the pressures and demands on foster carers in implementing the policy, and will work together with them to identify the most appropriate assistance.

#### **Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

42. The Council is responsible for ensuring that all children and young people transported by its contracted providers are appropriately safeguarded on their journey from home to school/college. The Council already has robust safeguarding policies and checks in place for these providers, and the same will apply for any new contracted transport arrangements. For example, when introducing travel to school/college from a central collection point, the Council will put appropriate safeguarding measures in place to ensure that children and young people are kept safe at pick-up/drop-off points, and on their journey to school/college.
43. The Council's independent travel training provider and its staff will be subject to rigorous checks, including enhanced level DBS.
44. Where a parent/carer has opted for the Independent Travel Allowance, they will be responsible for making their own arrangements, as they consider appropriate.

#### **Environmental sustainability implications**

45. Local authorities have a general duty to promote sustainable travel and transport, and the introduction of a wider variety of travel options as part of this policy helps to support this.
46. Independent travel training enables travel by public transport, cycling and walking, and the introduction of central collection points where groups of children and young people travel to school or college together from a central location locally will help to reduce the number of individual taxis or minibuses on the roads. Furthermore, these central locations would be within statutory walking distance of the child/young person's home and any potential environmental impacts will be assessed when planning these arrangements.

#### **Public Health implications**

47. The Council has a responsibility for, and wishes to promote, children and young people's health and wellbeing through home to school travel.
48. The Council has appropriate emergency and medical policies and procedures in place for children and young people travelling on contracted transport, and these are outlined in the policy.
49. The Council also has a responsibility to provide stress free transport, and will take this into consideration when working together with parents and carers to identify the most appropriate assistance for children and young people.

50. The new options have benefits to children and young people's wellbeing and their progress and development in education. Research shows that children and young people travel best when accompanied by a family member or trusted friend, and the new policy enables this. Furthermore, independent travel benefits young people by equipping them with the skills and confidence to independently access education, training and employment, raising their self-esteem.

#### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

51. The following happen next:

- The 'Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with an EHCP/SSEN, 0-25' will come fully into effect from September 2018. However, parents, carers and young people will be able to access features of the new policy in the current academic year.
- Next steps –
  - subject to Cabinet approval, this policy will be published on the Council's website and Local Offer website, and communicated to parents and carers of SEND children and young people
  - it has been recommended that any future changes to the policy are delegated to the Lead Member for Education, in consultation with the Assistant Director Schools and Learning, for decision
  - establish a Task Group made up of the Lead Member of Education and Lead Member for Environment and Transport, nominated Select Committee Members, the Assistant Director Schools and Learning, and the Strategic Transport Group Manager to monitor the progress and outcomes of this policy.

#### **Contact Officer:**

Helena Kulikowska, Senior Project Manager, 01483 519567

#### **Consulted:**

- Families of SEND children and young people
- Family Voice Surrey
- Surrey Special Schools

#### **Annexes:**

- 'Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with an Education Health and Care Plan or Statement of Special Educational Needs, 0-25 years'
- Equalities and Impact Assessment

#### **Sources/background papers:**

- Independent Travel Training for Children and Young People with SEND, (Surrey County Council Cabinet, 31 October 2017)