

CABINET- 31 JANUARY 2023

CABINET RESPONSE TO THE: HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE LEARNING REVIEW

Recommendations:

The Select Committee agreed the following recommendations:

1. That the Cabinet amends the Home to School Travel Assistance Policy and updates the Local Offer with immediate effect to ensure:

- a) A parent carer is, from the first instance, only given the alternative of a mileage allowance if their consent has been obtained. This accords with [DfE Statutory Home to School Guidance 2014](#) and should avoid the ensuing appeals with associated delays.

Agreed and this process is being followed.

- b) Parent carers who receive an Independent Travel Allowance are paid mileage for a return journey to the child or young person's setting in accordance with the [Local Government Ombudsman decision](#). This should be the general rule for all recipients, both to ease the Council's administrative burden and for parity. This policy should be backdated to September 2022 and recipients reimbursed accordingly.

Agreed and processing and communication are being prioritised.

- c) Parent carers eligible to receive an Independent Travel Allowance are paid it at the start of term rather than being reimbursed later.

We are committed to improving our systems and processes and will be reviewing aspects of our payment terms in the future. Paying in arrears enables us to deduct days not travelled (i.e. inset days, sickness absence, bank holidays etc) more effectively and reduces the risk of parents owing the Council money and excessive admin costs. If families are facing hardship, we have the facility to make emergency payments on application.

- d) Systems are coordinated so that an application for travel assistance is automatically made at the point at which a school of qualifying distance is named on the EHCP. An application is not classed as late in the circumstance that a school is named in the plan after deadline.

No application will be classed as 'late' going forward. When the team receive an application, it will follow our SLA of 20 days for assessment and 10 days for delivery. Significant improvements to process and systems are planned and are starting to be delivered.

- e) The inclusion of additional children on a route is not used as a reason to exceed maximum journey times considered best practice i.e. 45 minutes for primary and 75 minutes for secondary.

Agreed. The Council's policy sets out the journey times in the national guidance that we strive to follow. The Mobisoft route planning software knows based on a child's date of birth whether they are primary or secondary age and therefore sets either 75 or 45 minutes maximum journey time for planning purposes. Therefore, it gives options of including routes within those parameters.

- f) Where young people have the potential to travel independently, the independent travel training offer is promoted and additional public transport routes commissioned wherever possible.

Agreed. Our partners for travel training, Surrey Choices, are receiving regular referrals from SCC and young people are already benefitting from the travel training provided.

Colleagues in Strategic Transport and the Executive Director for Environment, Transport and Infrastructure are included in the governance arrangements overseeing the improvements in Home to School Transport – any additional public transport routes required will be highlighted to them via these channels

- g) When opening a new specialist school, consideration is given to whether it is on a bus or other public transport route.

Agreed, we work alongside the project team for any new school provision to see the most appropriate and cost-effective method to deliver travel assistance.

2. That the Select Committee endorses the recommendations in the Learning Review subject to Cabinet agreement of the changes recommended in 1 and on the proviso that:

- a) Children, Families and Lifelong Learning (CFLL) assigns a RAG rating to progress in the five workstreams and reports these to each formal Select Committee meeting, and

All recommendations are being individually tracked and reported. Progress on the 50 recommendations will be reported to the next formal SC meeting. The transformation programme is wider than the learning review recommendations and so the five workstreams are not being used to capture progress and activity.

- b) CFLL shares with the Select Committee for scrutiny as soon as possible, its proposals for the performance indicators referred to in its recommendation #39, which measure a young person's home to school transport journey from application to delivery. These should include the number of occasions the

transport team misses a target to (i) respond in a timely manner to general queries (5 working days) and with an application outcome (20 working days), and

Agreed on application outcome. Detailed KPIs (including the two recommended above) are shared with the Oversight Board every month.

- c) CFLL shares the above data at each formal Select Committee meeting as part of its regular monitoring of Inclusion and Additional Needs.

Agreed, we will align regularity of reporting with this reporting cycle.

- d) In order to provide clarity on the different policy post-16, CFLL works with Family Voice Surrey to produce a separate guide for parent carers and young people specifically for post-16 transport.

Agreed and a workshop is in place on 27th January for the Post 16 Parent Guide to be developed.

- e) CFLL carries out an annual survey of home to school transport satisfaction in conjunction with Family Voice Surrey.

Agreed, we are not only developing closer links with Family Voice and supporting their annual survey for families who are members of Family Voice. We are also developing a Customer Feedback Survey to go out with all correspondence and accessible through our website to gain more feedback from a wider spectrum of customers. This is scheduled to be launched at key dates within the delivery calendar of 1st June and 1st September.

3. That the Select Committee receives an updated report from CFLL on the new round of Home to School Travel Assistance applications, at its meeting in May 2023.

Agreed.

4. That Family Voice Surrey report on parent carer experiences to Select Committee at its May 2023 meeting and prior to that discuss developments with CFLL officers.

A regular monthly dialog has been set up between our Stakeholder Liaison Officer and Family Voice to discuss arising issues and concerns. Therefore developments and changes and improvement work will be discussed between SCC and Family Voice prior to the next Select Committee meeting.

Liz Bowes

Chairman - Children, Families, Lifelong Learning Select Committee

Cabinet Response:

I would like to thank the Chairman and members of the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee for their time in considering the learning review of Surrey's Home to School Transport Assistance (H2STA) service. I welcome the feedback and debate about the review and the work being undertaken to change the way in which this important service operates, so improving the experience of children, young people and families who rely on us. The activity to deliver significant improvements in the H2STA are already being made and the Select Committee will receive a full update on progress when it meets in May 2023.

The recommendations from the Select Committee have been considered carefully. The actions taken are outlined under each of the recommendations listed above in **bold**.

Clare Curran
Cabinet Member for Education and Learning
31 January 2023