CONSULTATION ON HOME TO SCHOOL TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY AND PRACTICE 2019

All Local Authorities are expected to have a travel assistance policy that sets out how they provide travel assistance and this should be reviewed regularly.

In preparing the revised policy and practice – we have taken note of the DfE statutory Guidance (2014), Local Government Ombudsman’s reports, complaint and appeals, legislation, and the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

There are few changes to the actual policy but we are also clarifying how we make decisions about agreeing to providing assistance and when and how we will provide it.

Royal Greenwich has increased the travel assistance team and is now more timely and consistent in the assessment of applications and our decision making.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Experience of children and young people

We are aware that some children and young people have long and stressful journeys to school. Although the national guidance suggests journeys should be no longer than 45 minutes for primary school children and no more than 75 minutes for a secondary age pupil (unless they are attending out of borough schools) this is a long time for any child to spend on the bus – and for some children it is not a positive experience.

Whilst the policy is clear that door to door transport will only be provided when a child’s needs are exceptional – we have not had the range of alternative assistance offers in place and in many cases, collection points or personal transport budgets may be better for the young person and family.

Promoting independence – the SEND Code of Practice requires us to prepare for Adulthood at the earliest stage and independent travel is a key element of this. This means that children and young people should be used to travelling on public transport and learning to walk between different settings as early as possible. Currently many children and young people do not have this experience.

Some young people reach adulthood without having the skills to go to work experience or college, or to be able to get to work.

At the same time, Royal Greenwich is committed to healthy living, reducing pollution and the anti-obesity strategy which means supporting more children and young people to walk, cycle to schools or take public transport if they are physically able to do so.

We intend to invest in Independent Travel Training and this will be offered to young people who are assessed as being able to benefit from this. There is also a range of independent travel training available through the Road Safety team and through schools.
We will also be introducing collection points for children and young people whose needs do not require them to be picked up from home. This will also encourage and enable children and young people to be able to walk to the collection points and to learn to wait for the relevant bus.

**Cost** – As with all services we need to ensure that we provide travel assistance in the most cost effective manner we can and ensure value for money.

One way to do this is to make sure that routes are planned well in advance to purchase or lease the most appropriate vehicles for the numbers and needs of children and young people.

Having to change routes at short notice to accommodate those who apply late, makes it difficult for children and young people who need consistency, and for parents who have to accommodate changes in collection times.

**Parental choice** – we would like to introduce new ways of providing support that may suit some young people and parents better than current methods.

### WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED CHANGES?

There are some changes to policy these are:

- Timescales for making travel assistance applications
- Planned regular reviews of travel assistance
- Increased travel assistance options including collection points
- We have integrated the policy for young people over 16 into this policy for ease
- We have explained how children and young people who are looked after have their travel needs assessed

We are also clarifying:

- What might be taken into consideration in making a decision where a child lives within the statutory walking distance from home to school
- What type of journeys will be considered eligible
- How we make decision when parents choose a school that is not their nearest qualifying or suitable school
- Royal Greenwich will decide on the most appropriate offer after considering the child and family’s specific needs

### WHAT WILL THESE MEAN FOR PARENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

- We will be reviewing eligibility for travel assistance at key points such as secondary transfer or post 16, and where there is any change of circumstances such as change of school or change of address.
- At that review your child may no longer be eligible under the policy, or if they are still eligible, the type of travel assistance offered may not be the same as they currently receive.
- We will also start a process of reviewing eligibility for all children and young people – this is likely to be done on a school by school basis.
- From September – you may be asked to take your child or young person to a collection point rather than being picked up from home.
• We are likely to require parents to renew their travel application on an annual basis

WHAT WILL WE DO TO SUPPORT PARENTS WITH ANY CHANGES?

• We will ensure that any decision about alternative offers are based on an assessment of the child or young person’s needs,
• If we introduced a cut-off date we will make sure that there is sufficient advance information of this available to schools and parents, and that we accept late applications in exceptional circumstances
• We will give parents time to make alternative arrangements if a re-assessment of needs results in travel assistance no longer being provided

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE Please complete on the on line survey monkey where possible (on the Local offer website) www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/localoffer

1. Are you:-
   • An interested member of the public
   • Parent or carer of someone who uses home to school transport
   • Someone who has previously used home to school transport
   • Representative of a school
   • Someone else

2. If you are a parent or carer of someone with SEN – how does your child currently travel to school/college?
   • Family car
   • Shared coach or minibus
   • Shared Taxi
   • Individual taxi
   • Travels independently
   • Walks
   • Other (please state)

3. What age is your child/young person
   • Under 5
   • 5-11 (primary schools)
   • 12 – 16 (secondary schools)
   • 17-19 (post 16 provision)
   • 19+ (college/other educational setting)

4. Eligibility for travel assistance:
   • Does the policy make it clear to you whether your child or young person might be eligible for travel assistance?
• Is it clear to you what journeys are eligible for travel assistance?
• Is it clear to you how decisions are made?
• What would help to make it clear if your child or young person is eligible for travel assistance and the journey to school and back?
• Anything else about eligibility?

5 Collection points – (see information on local offer)
   Where do you think they should be?
• Bus stops
• Local Schools
• Children’s centres
• Libraries
• Railway stations
• Anywhere else?

6 How far from home do you think they should be?
• 400-600m (up to a third of a mile)
• 600-800m (up to half a mile)
• 1 mile

7. What do you think should to be taken into consideration in deciding whether a collection point is suitable for a child or young person?
• Distance from home to collection point
• Mobility needs of child
• Mobility needs of parent
• Health needs of child
• Health needs of parent
• Sensory impairments
• Behaviour needs (for children with ASD and learning disabilities)
• Anything else?

8 Personal travel budget (see information on local offer) – what would make you interested in this option?
• Flexibility – can choose own options of how to get child to school
• Amount of money provided
• Ability to take child to school and meet teachers
• Length of journey to school for child
• Less stress on my child
• Parking availability at school or college
• Anything else?

9. Thinking about support for you if your child is not or no longer eligible for travel assistance.
   What would help you?
• Support to consider options
Support to discuss breakfast club with school
Support to manage your child’s behaviour while walking to school or using public transport.
Information sheets with ideas on local offer
Anything else?

10 Do you have any other comments or any other suggestions as to how we can provide the most effective service to meet the needs of children and young people in respect to travel assistance?

Please complete on the on line survey monkey where possible (on the Local offer website) www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/localoffer

OR send your responses to SEND.TravelAssitance@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

Or post to:
SEN Travel Assistance Team
Children’s Services
The Woolwich Centre,
35 Wellington Street,
London SE18 6HQ

Consultation closes on March 14th 2019