

# Shaping our Travel offer

10 July 2019

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

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Working as one to  
serve our city

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# Forward Plan

## Policy Approvals:

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| • 4 June 2019          | Scrutiny Board               |
| • w/c 10 June 2019     | Directorate Leadership Teams |
| • 10 July 2019         | Cabinet                      |
| • 2 Sept - 29 Nov 2019 | Formal Consultation          |
| • 19 February 2020     | Cabinet Sign Off Policy      |
| • 23 May 2020          | Policy Published             |
| • 1 Sept 2020          | Policy implemented           |

# Recommendation

- Cabinet will be asked to approve the commencement of an 12-week formal consultation on the draft All Age Travel Assistance Policy (Appendix 1) from 2 September 2019 to 29 November 2019.

# Key notes for Cabinet

- Proposals 1 – 9 outline the significant changes to the current policy and practice that would be present in the new policy.
- The results of the recent informal engagement work have been key to the development of the draft policy to date.
- Further work with co-production partners is still taking place to ensure that they are regularly involved in the development of this work – this includes ‘Voice4Parents’ and ‘Changing Our Lives’.
- Please note that good practice guidelines suggest the introduction of any changes should always be phased in appropriately.

# Reasons to improve our offer

- City of Wolverhampton Council believes that it has a moral and legal duty to support and maximise independence wherever possible.
- Local authorities are expected to provide a diverse range of travel assistance options.
- City of Wolverhampton Council believes that by improving our travel offer we will generate efficiencies in the £3.4 million spent on travel assistance each year.
- Current services are not structured to cope with the expected 13% increase in demand in the next 3 years.

# Proposal 1: Develop a single All Age Travel Assistance Policy

## Benefits:

- Policy will be clearer and easy to understand.
- Will improve transition between child and adult services.
- Joint planning and commissioning services may provide a better use of resources and a more joined up approach to provision.

## Risks:

- Other Local Authorities have faced legal challenges.
- Parents may have made school choices based on home to school transport arrangements for a particular school, and any changes might impact adversely on individual family budgets.
- Increased levels of co-ordination will also be required between the assessing units.

## Proposal 2: The introduction of a personalised assessment process

### Benefits:

- Policy aims to maximise independence and demonstrates that we are focused on improving independence skills.
- Feedback from engagement suggests our citizens would welcome greater personalisation.
- Optimise the most efficient use of Council resources.

### Risks:

- Savings associated with travel training are unlikely to be realised in the short term.
- Parents who currently choose to transport pupils to and from school may decide to apply for personal transport budget.
- Traffic management issues in some schools.

# Proposal 3: The introduction of charges for young people of sixth form age

## Benefits:

- May increase the participation in independent travel training.
- The contributions of those remaining on transport could be used to fund the independent travel training programme.

## Risks:

- Decisions to charge may have to be altered in 2021 due to DfE review.
- This could lead to an increase in number of appeals.
- Financial pressure on Personal Independence Payments travel mobility payments.



## **Proposal 4: The removal of automatic eligibility to travel assistance in an educational establishment for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs**

### **Benefits:**

- Delivers clarity and consistency across the policy.
- Promoting and maximising the independence of Children and Young People.
- Optimise the most efficient use of Council resources.

### **Risks:**

- There may be disruption to the routine of some who may be at high risk of disengaging. The social cost of this impact is difficult to ascertain.

## **Proposal 5: To provide transport only from a single address, unless there are exceptional circumstances**

### **Benefits:**

- Single address allows for consistency in route planning.

### **Risks:**

- Concerns have been raised by equalities that implementing this policy could have a far more significant impact on children whose parents have separated.
- Increased risk of tribunals.

# Proposal 6: To clarify the application and appeals process

## Benefits:

- An independent and transparent appeals process would provide parental confidence that the process is fair.
- This process could reduce the number of complaints to the Ombudsman.
- Currently stage 2 appeals are difficult to administer due to lack of guidelines. A clear definition of this would be beneficial.

## Risks:

- If a model similar to the schools' admissions appeals panel was chosen there would be an additional cost.

## **Proposal 7: To explain more clearly that travel assistance is only provided to the nearest appropriate educational establishment or social care venue, unless there are exceptional circumstances**

### **Benefits:**

- Greater equality of implementation.
- Increased efficiency of vehicle routing.
- Reduction in journey times.

### **Risks:**

- This proposal could be subject to challenge through SEND tribunal – a previous attempt to enforce this policy led to a tribunal where concerns about accessibility were raised.

## **Proposal 8: To explain more clearly that where individuals are eligible for transport, pick up points will be used, unless there are exceptional circumstances**

### **Benefits:**

- Greater equality of implementation .
- Reduction in time pupils spend on transport.
- Streamlining routes would be economically and environmentally beneficial.

### **Risks:**

- Possible increase in number of appeals.

## **Proposal 9: To explain more clearly that parents are expected to accompany their children to school, unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

### **Benefits:**

- Improved ability to justify decisions when they are challenged.
- Generate efficiency savings.

### **Risks:**

- Significant shift in practice may lead to increased use of Local Government Ombudsman appeals.
- Risk of impact falling hardest on low income families and those whose parents have separated.

# Questions?



# Thank you

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