



**Report of Children's Transport Programme Manager**

**Report to Chief Officer, Partnerships and Health**

**Date: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

**Subject: Withdrawal of Planned Changes to Post-16 SEND Transport Policy**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The Executive Board of July 2017 took a decision (item 50) to introduce changes to the transport offer for post-16 learners who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- The new offer included a phased introduction of Personal Travel Allowances (PTA's) instead of transport for new entrants to post-16 learning from September 2018.
- Although the changes were subject to rigorous consultation and an extensive communications exercise during 2016/17, in early 2018 a small number of families highlighted the implications the new offer would have for them. Children & Families services continually listen to the views of children and their families, and a decision was taken to pause the phased introduction of the changes for new entrants scheduled for September 2018. This was subject to further reviewing how feedback from families could be acted upon and identifying alternative approaches.
- It is now proposed that the changes are withdrawn and a new offer of voluntary PTA's is put in place.

**2. Best Council Plan Implications**

- This decision will ensure the Children's Transport offer will continue to support our aspiration to be a Child Friendly City

### **3. Resource Implications**

- Measures are set out in paragraphs 3.4 – 3.6, which are delivering savings and have been reflected in the 2019/20 budget and therefore mitigate the impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy from this decision

### **4. Recommendations**

- a) The Chief Officer Partnerships & Health approves the removal of sections 7.2 and 7.3 of the Children's Transport Policy, which were inserted in July 2017, and to apply the Children's Transport Policy (Nov 2015).
- b) To note that the officer responsible for implementing this decision is the Head of Commissioning and Market Management

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To advise the Chief Officer, Partnerships and Health of a new way of working and to recommend a significant operational decision to withdraw the implementation of the new post-16 transport arrangements.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 The Executive Board of July 2017 took a decision to introduce changes to the transport offer for post-16 learners who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- 2.2 The new offer was designed to meet the strategic aims of Children & Families Services to work restoratively with families, doing things with them rather than for them and to better prepare young people for adulthood with more independence for themselves and from the council. This was to be achieved by offering Personal Travel Allowances to enable young people and families to make their own transport arrangements instead of continuing to provide taxis and minibuses upon entry to post-16 education.
- 2.3 The new offer included a phased introduction for new entrants to post-16 education from September 2018
- 2.4 In addition to delivering on strategic outcomes, financial modelling indicated a long term opportunity to achieve efficiencies valued at approximately £830,000 once the changes were fully phased in. During the first year of phasing (2018/19 academic year) it was anticipated there could be implementation costs, which would have an impact on the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial year budgets. A partial year saving would be delivered in the 2020/21 financial year and full year savings realised in 2021/22 FY. Following the two years of anticipated cost increases, the savings anticipated in the third year were factored into the medium term financial plan.
- 2.5 Although the changes were subject to rigorous consultation and an extensive communications exercise during 2016 and 2017, in early 2018 a small number of families highlighted the implications the new offer would have for them.

## **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 Additional feedback was received in early 2018, some time after the completion of an extensive communications exercise
- 3.2 Some parents reported that the new arrangements would cause disruption to their work arrangements and that they were also unable to identify ways to make their own transport arrangements.
- 3.3 Children & Families services continually listen to the views of children and their families and act on feedback where possible. In light of the additional feedback received a decision was taken to pause the phased introduction of the changes for new entrants scheduled for September 2018.
- 3.4 The initial consultation had provided strong evidence that PTA's would be welcomed by a significant number of families and have therefore been offered on a voluntary basis. These were offered through engaging directly with individual families to explore how a PTA could work for them on a bespoke basis. The underlying requirement was a need to offer a PTA that would meet the needs of a family whilst achieving a cost efficiency for Children's Transport.
- 3.5 The offer of PTA's on a voluntary take-up basis has proved extremely successful, with over 120 families accepting a PTA during the 2018/19 financial year. In addition to offering families greater flexibility and control over their transport arrangements, this has delivered full-year equivalent savings of over £400k and has helped offset additional costs arising from the increase in the number of children requiring transport.
- 3.6 In addition to generating significant savings from the outset through voluntary PTA's, other efficiencies have been achieved in the provision of mainstream home to school and swimming transport provided by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority with a full-year effect of £300k savings.
- 3.7 The proposed phased changes are no longer considered to be beneficial in their entirety. Personal Travel Allowances have been found to be successful on a voluntary take-up basis and will instead be implemented. It is now therefore proposed that the post-16 changes previously approved are cancelled and that PTA's are offered solely on a voluntary take-up basis. Any offer of a PTA would continue to be dependent upon it delivering a sustainable saving to council as well as empowering families.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Although the changes were subject to a rigorous consultation exercise and an extensive communications plan prior to the July 2017 Executive Board decision, Children & Families has taken time to listen to further feedback from families since March 2018. These new recommendations are proposed in light of the additional feedback received.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 A full EDCI assessment was carried out to support the July 2017 Executive Board decisions. There are no EDCI considerations at this time as the decision involves 'no-change' to existing arrangements if families prefer not to accept a PTA on a voluntary basis.

## **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 This decision will ensure the Children's Transport offer will continue to support our aim to ensure that children & young people do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life as prioritised in the Best Council Plan.

4.3.2 The provision of personal travel allowances is in keeping with the Restorative Practice approach adopted by C&F Services, to work *with* families rather than doing things *to* them or *for* them.

4.3.3 This decision will also support the following aims set out in the Children & Young People's Plan:

- Supporting families to give children the best start in life
- Improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes
- Helping young people into adulthood, to develop life skills and be ready for work

### Climate Emergency

4.3.4 Children and young people with SEND frequently need to travel further to reach suitable learning settings and the council has a duty to provide appropriate transport assistance. However, by providing families with personal travel budgets to enable them to make their own transport arrangements, there is a greatly increased likelihood of journey distances and travelling times being reduced. This is due to families being able make their own journeys with greater journey distance & duration efficiency, rather than being dependent on taxis or other transport with journeys that begin elsewhere, often some distance from home.

## **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 The measures set out in paragraphs 3.4 – 3.6 which are delivering savings have been reflected in the 2019/20 budget and therefore help mitigate the impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy from this decision.

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 As a consequence of an earlier decision, this decision is a significant operational decision that may be delegated to the Chief Officer, Partnerships & Health and is not subject to call-in.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 As the withdrawal of the changes represents a 'no-change' arrangement, there are no risks.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1.1 Changes to the post-16 transport offer for young people with SEND were subject to rigorous consultation and an extensive communications exercise during 2016 and 2017. However, in early 2018 a small number of families highlighted the implications the new offer would have for them. Children & Families services continually take the views of children and their families into account, and in light of the new feedback received the planned changes were paused.
- 5.1.2 The feedback was considered and an alternative option of offering PTA's on a voluntary basis was piloted with great success, achieving full-year equivalent savings of over £400k
- 5.1.3 Efficiencies in the mainstream school transport operation were also identified, generating £300k of efficiencies.
- 5.1.4 It is now proposed that the planned changes are withdrawn in light of the new options and efficiencies that have been identified.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Chief Officer Partnerships & Health approves the removal of sections 7.2 and 7.3 of the Children's Transport Policy, which were inserted in July 2017, and to apply the Children's Transport Policy (Nov 2015).
- 6.2 To note that the officer responsible for implementing this decision is the Head of Commissioning and Market Management

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 none

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.