

TRANSPORT POLICIES FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

BUDGET SAVING: £2,000,000 over 6 years for home to school transport.
£500,000 over 2 years for adult transport.

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council provides transport for over a thousand people across the borough every day; travelling to schools, colleges, Council facilities and other services.

This option will involve a full review of that transport, with a view to stopping providing transport to some Council services, and instead requiring the people using the services to either contribute to the cost of the transport or find other means.

For home to school transport including post 16 college transport the proposal is to change the Council's transport policies so that the Council provides statutory transport which supports those with the greatest need. The proposal is to phase the changes based on academic year, commencing 2014/15.

The home to school transport has a budget of £4.6m – savings proposed are.

- The removal of discretionary denominational transport. £180,000 phased over 6 academic years.
- The removal of Post 16 transport (non SEN). £132,000 phased over 3 academic years.
- A reduction in the number of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) eligible for transport. This includes the removal of all Post 16 transport for students with SEN. £1.7m phased over a period of 6 academic years.

For adult transport the proposal is to reduce the requirement for transport provision through application of a new transport policy and encouraging those who are able to use public transport or motobility vehicles and this will allow greater flexibility and independence in line with personalisation.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Department for Education home to school benchmarking data spend per capita illustrates a relatively high spend in Wirral compared to other Local Authorities: Wirral £91, Statistical Neighbour Average £77; Lowest £31; Highest £93.

Wirral has higher SEN population than most authorities (Percentage of children with Statements Wirral 3.3%, National 2.2%). The current policy provides transport for all children with a statement, other Local Authorities do not.

For home to school transport there is no national volume benchmarking data available. However Wirral's data would be expected to be high as most LAs have amended their home to school transport policies removing of denominational and reducing Post 16 and SEN transport.

For adult transport the adoption of a refreshed adult transport policy will encourage greater independence and lead to more effective use of this resource in line with personalisation. The policy will encourage those who are able to use public transport or motobility vehicles to do so. The Council will continue to support individuals who have no alternative means of transport.

IMPACT

This option would result in a reduced transport service for children and adults. This may result in a potential impact on other Council services as a result of the change.

The option would result in a reduction in School Escort Staff (part time staff) commensurate with a reduction in the numbers of students transport and vehicles contracted through the proposed phased approach.

The proposed changes have the potential to impact on the educational attainment of students, life chances, reduced choice and parental employment opportunities. Other potential impacts are on school attendance, school resources, OFSTED inspections and Department for Education assessments. There is potential to impact on other Council services such as Education Social Welfare, Special Educational Needs teams, Social Work teams, Youth Outreach and Youth Offending Teams. There may be carbon reduction implications as more children may be driven to school with associated road safety implications.

The option would also result in a reduction in Drivers and Passenger Assistants (part time staff) commensurate with the proposed reduction in the numbers of adults transported.

Characteristics of the groups who would be impacted upon include age, disability, religion or belief and socio-economic status. Children, families and adults in all wards would potential be affected.

There is also potential for more families or adults requiring assistance from voluntary and community sector organisations following the proposed reduction in services.

MITIGATION

For home to school transport students and parents will be made aware of the proposed policy change before making choices to start /change school at reception or year 7 or commence college or sixth form courses from September 2014 onwards. Phasing of the policy change ensures that transport will not be withdrawn from those currently eligible. Use of travel training in a phased supported way can increase confidence in using public transport for other purposes and can help to prepare the young person for life after education and into adulthood.

For adult transport the policy has been developed to promote independence across all areas of service provision and seeks to ensure as many people live and travel as independently as possible within their community. The Council will continue to support individuals who have no alternative means of transport.

Information is available from other Councils who have carried out such policy changes.