

Reference	
Executive Director	Isobel Boler
Cabinet Member	Cllr Lucy Smith

Section A

Service Area	Children, Young People & Skills
Budget Option Description	SEN Home to School Transport

Budget Reduction Proposal – Detail and Objectives

Current Position

SEN Home to School Transport currently provides travel assistance to a total of 527 children and young people in the form of transport, mileage reimbursement or a personal travel budget.

Transport is provided by external operators and the Council's internal transport service following a competitive procurement exercise. A total of 423 children and young people access transport provision to and from school, the breakdown of vehicle types in use is:

Vehicle Type	Number of Vehicles	Number of children/Young People
Saloon Car	33	40
Euro Cab / Black Cab	1	2
Private Hire Minibus*	12	37
Private Hire Minibus with Tail Lift or Ramp*	3	6 (2 children travelling in individual vehicles due to needs)
PSV Minibus**	26	154 + 1 therapy dog
PSV Minibus with Tail Lift or Ramp**	26	167
Internal Fleet – Minibus with tail lift	3	17

* Private Hire Minibus – up to 8 seats and licenced by Bury Council's Licensing Team

** Public Service Vehicles (PSV) Minibuses – 8 seats and above, regulated by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency

NB: Note the maximum vehicle capacity is not always utilised in order to accommodate the needs of the children and young people on the journey.

It is important to note that the base budget for SEND Transport/travel assistance has remained unchanged for a number of years despite significantly increasing demand pressures. These demand pressures are likely to continue.

Per capita, the expenditure on SEND transport in Bury is the lowest across the ten GM LA's and amongst the lowest nationally.

Proposal

Review policy for travel assistance for children and young people with special educational needs and disability. Consideration to be given to reducing policy to statutory minimum requirements:

- Removal of post 16 provision

- Removal of travel assistance for children under the statutory school age (5 years of age)
- Removal of transport to short breaks / respite provision
- Review of provision of transport for students on a reduced timetable (Pru) with a view to shared transport only at the beginning and end of the school day. School and parents to be responsible for requirements that differ.
- Review of personal travel budget allowance, possible introduction of a banding system based on mileage.

The proposals will ensure that the policy meets statutory minimum requirements. As a result, some service users currently in receipt of transport or travel assistance, will no longer be eligible.

It is important to note that current expenditure in respect of post-16 transport is significantly in excess of the budget provision, and therefore, whilst this proposal would reduce costs, the savings to the base budget would be much lower.

In addition, the statutory post 19 provision needs to be included in the travel policy following the outcome of a Local Government Ombudsmen investigation. This will have the effect of increasing costs in respect of the post 19 element.

Stakeholder consultation will be required to inform decisions on changes to the policy, with the outcome of that decision being presented to Cabinet for determination.

In addition to proposed changes to policy, there are a number of operational aspects that will be pursued.

Review increased use of the Council's Operational Services internal vehicle fleet.

- The Council's internal fleet currently undertake 3 routes (1 on a temporary basis) to Elms Bank High School, Millwood School and a combined route to Tottington Primary and Tottington High School.

Retender of Home to School and College Transport Contract.

- Existing framework (Dynamic Purchasing System) is due to expire 31st August 2023. It should be noted increased costs may be incurred due to the cost-of-living crisis and increase in contractor operating costs (fuel costs, energy costs, driver salary, increase in cost of vehicle parts).
- It should be noted that additional PSV minibuses with a tail lift may be required to safely accommodate wheelchair users. Depending on the size of the vehicle (standard minibus or welfare minibus) the service has been able to allocate two or three wheelchairs to a vehicle however, over the past few years the wheelchairs have increased in size resulting in limited capacity on the vehicles. Due to the length and width of some wheelchairs it is only possible to allocate one or two to a vehicle with additional seated passengers. A member of staff must be able to access the wheelchair from all sides in the case of emergency evacuation or to attend to the needs of the individual child/young person.

Ensure all alternative travel assistance offers continue to be explored during the assessment process and maximised where possible.

- Mileage Reimbursement – 55 children & young people in receipt at a cost of £94k per academic year, average of approx. £1709 per child/young person in comparison to £6137 per child/young person on transport.

- Personal Travel Budget - 49 children & young people in receipt at a cost of £68k per academic year, average of approx. £1387 per child/young person in comparison to £6137 per child/young person on transport.
- Independent Travel Training – contract in place until August 2024 with an option to extend to August 2025. The contract provides 1 full time and 2 part time (20 hours) travel trainers with a target of 15 to 20 (minimum) young people successfully complete the travel training programme per academic year.

Independent Travel Training – consideration to be given to an additional part time travel trainer at a cost of £12,030 per annum.

Review use of school owned vehicles

- A number of schools own a small number of minibuses that could be utilised to support home to school transport. Further discussions to be held with schools.

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Budget Reduction (£m)	0	45	90
Staffing Reduction (FTE)	0		

Section B

What impact does the proposal have on:

Property

N/A

Service Delivery

Review of the travel assistance policy could potentially have a negative impact for some of our most vulnerable children and young people due to:

- Removal of post 16 provision (college students aged 16 to 19) – potential saving of £400k per academic year – but the base budget is £88,800, which will be the extent of the reportable savings. However this needs to be done in line with statutory regulations with a need to consider
- Removal of travel assistance for children under the statutory school age (5 years of age) – potential saving £80k based on transport costs to Hoyle Nursery and individual children accessing transport to school provision.

The review of policy will have a positive outcome for a small number of students aged 19 plus requesting travel assistance support.

- Inclusion of consideration of post 19 provision

Organisation (Including Other Directorates/Services)

Operations – Waste & Transport Team
 Persona – Day Services
 Children’s Services – Children with Disabilities Team
 EHCP Team Assessment Team

Workforce – Number of posts likely to be affected.
N/A
Communities and Service Users
Schools, Bury2gether; parents; Children with SEND; Children with Disabilities

Other Partner Organisations
Contractors

Section C

Key Risks and Mitigations

Risks	Mitigations
Lack of support in agreement to review of travel assistance policy to statutory minimum	Support required from Senior Leadership Team, Elected Members
Challenge from parents to travel policy review and consultation	Ensure that the policy is promoted and clear to families
Challenge from parents, social workers and health in relation to removal of respite transport	
Availability of internal fleet and drivers	Discussions to take place with Operational Services
Agreement with Adult Day Centres to adjust the timings that adults are transported to and from the day centres to allow the internal fleet to undertake school contract work.	Discussions to take place with Adult Care Services
Competitive cost to use the internal fleet on home to school transport, current costs are higher than external contractors and recharged to the department	Ensure competitive pricing submission in mini competition
Challenge from external contractors regarding increased use of internal fleet throughout the contract term. (The Council's internal fleet operate on a section 19 permit and do not have to meet the same requirements as Public Service Vehicle operators)	Meetings with contractors to make clear Council's current position.

Key Delivery Milestones

Include timescales for procurement, commissioning changes etc.

Milestone	Timeline
Review of policy for Travel Assistance	
Implementation of revised Travel Assistance policy	

Removal of Respite/Short Breaks Transport	
Increased use of Council's internal transport fleet	September 2023 (start of new contract)

Section D

Consultation Required?	Yes
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	Start Date	End Date
Staff		
Trade Unions		
Public		
Service User		
Other		

Equality Impact

Is there potential for the proposed budget reduction to have a disproportionate/ adverse impact on any of the following?

Disabled people	Yes
Particular Ethnic Groups	No
Men or Women (including impacts due to pregnancy/maternity)	No
People who are married or in a civil partnership	No
People of particular sexual orientation	No
People who are proposing to undergo, undergoing or undergone a process or part of a process of gender assignment	No
People on low incomes	No
People in particular age groups	Yes
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs	No

EIA Required?	Yes
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Section E

Financial Implications and Investment Requirements

Investment requirements – Revenue and Capital
<p>Consideration to an additional part time (20 hours) independent travel trainer to enhance the independent travel training offer at a cost of £12,030 per annum. Agreement to an additional travel trainer would be an invest to save initiative, students are generally training to travel independently from year 8 or 9 and could potentially generate savings for year 9 to year 11 of their schooling, based on the average cost per head on transport 1 student successfully completing the training could generate savings up to £6k per academic year. It is expected a minimum of 3 or 4 students would complete the training in one academic year demonstrating further savings while also providing the young person with lifelong skills.</p>

Finance Comments – Will the proposal deliver the savings and within the agreed timescales?

Yes