

Report of the Corporate Director Children, Education &  
Communities

## **Home to School Transport**

### **Summary**

1. This report provides a summary of home to school transport arrangements across York, in terms of policy; both statutory and discretionary elements, financial position and current pressures and challenges and future options to explore further.

### **Background**

2. Home to school transport is the responsibility of Local Authorities. In the City of York the current transport budget for the 19/20 financial year is £2.78 million. Currently an overspend of £525,000 is projected.
3. Current pressures on home to school transport budgets are not unique to York. A significant number of other LA's across the country are reporting similar pressures and are therefore looking at reviewing policies and contract arrangements.

### **Home to School Transport Policy**

#### *Mainstream Schools – statutory responsibility*

4. This policy applies to pupils who are attending their catchment school, and who live more than 2 miles (primary pupils) or 3 miles (secondary pupils) from that, using the shortest safest walking route. It also applies to pupils attending their catchment school where there is not a safe walking route.
5. The majority of the above pupils in this category in York are transported by dedicated home to school bus services.

### Low income - statutory responsibility

6. This policy applies to pupils who are in receipt of free school meals because their parents are on a low income or are in receipt of maximum level of working tax credit. The pupil must be attending one of their 3 nearest secondary schools where places are available and are over 2 miles from the home address, using the shortest safest walking route. This element of policy is to widen school choice for low income families. Note that this policy only applies to secondary aged pupils.
7. The majority of the above pupils who qualify for assistance under this policy in York are provided with bus pass to allow them to travel on public bus services to and from school.

### Children & Young People in Care (CYPIC) - discretionary

8. Whilst the mainstream transport policy is applied in the first instance, there are an increasing number of situations where transport support is required for our CYPIC outside of this policy. For example where a CYPIC is placed with foster carers away from their local area and where it is not felt appropriate for the young person to move schools, therefore requiring transport being provided to their existing school. The majority of this transport tends to be provided by taxis.
9. All secondary and post 16 aged CYPIC are also entitled to a bus pass which allows them to travel 24/7 across any public service bus route in and around York.

### SEN transport (including provision up to the age of 25) – discretionary

10. This policy covers pupils who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), and/or a disability, and/or significant medical problem. Our mainstream transport policy is applied in the first instance, however if a pupil is not eligible under this criteria, and the assessment of the pupils needs indicates a requirement for support getting to and from school, then a menu of transport options is considered to match the pupil to the appropriate form of support. The options of support range from the support of a walking escort, independent travel training or a bus pass to an individual taxi with 1:1 support from a Passenger Transport Assistant.
11. Increasing number of pupils with EHCP's, and the increasing levels of need have resulted in more individualised and specialised packages of

support having to be put in place, which consequently places additional pressures on resources.

12. In addition, the extension of EHCP's to young people aged up to the age of 25 has seen an increasing number of young people requiring transport for longer. As more education provision is now being provided more locally for those young people, that provision tends to be more personalised, often provided at a number of different venues across the city, which firstly makes sharing transport difficult, and therefore results in increased use of vehicles equating to increased costs.

#### Mainstream Post-16 – discretionary

13. Those students eligible for assistance under the current policy, is to those students whose parents are on a low income. The majority of support for eligible students is by way of a public service bus pass.

#### **Contracts for Home to School Transport**

14. Home to school transport work across York is split into two areas. The contracts for Home to School Bus services serve Fulford, Huntington and Tadcaster Grammar, and four primary schools - Poppleton Ousebank, St Mary's CE, Bishopthorpe Infants and Archbishop of York CE Juniors. These contracts are currently held by York Pullman and expire at the end of July 2021. The contracts require all vehicles to be fitted with seatbelts and there are targets to be met around vehicle emissions.
15. The other two contracts are for minibus (8 seaters and less) and taxis. One contract covers transport to the two special schools, Applefields and Hob Moor Oaks, whilst the other contract is for any other home to school transport work to any school. Both these contracts are currently held by Streamline Taxis and both expire at the end of August 2021.
16. All the above contracts have a significant focus on quality and safeguarding. The previous procurement process assessed applications on 60% cost 40% quality. All contracts require all staff working on the contract to have enhanced DBS checks done through the City of York Council and all staff are required to attend safeguarding training on a 3 yearly cycle.
17. The contracts also require the transport provider to deliver a considerable part of the administration involved in delivering home to

school transport services. This includes for example route planning, issuing of bus passes, customer enquiries and stage 1 complaints.

18. There is one further model of transport provision currently being provided at Danesgate School where elements of the transport at that school is delivered by an in-house transport team. This model has been trialled over a number of years in an attempt to deliver the specialist transport requirements for the pupils who attend the main school site or one of its satellite provisions. The increase in the number of pupils attending the various Danesgate provision has meant that transport is being provided by a mix of the in-house fleet as well as taxi provision delivered through the contract held by Streamline Taxis.
19. The in-house fleet uses hired vehicles and the staff are either employed by the City of York Council or are temporary staff recruited from an employment agency. The purpose of trialling an in-house model was an attempt to link the transport to the needs of the pupil. Transport requirements at Danesgate differ from other schools in that not all pupils are attending on a full time basis and therefore transport is needed at different times of the school day.
20. Costs associated with Danesgate are funded from a different budget to all other home to school transport costs, their costs are funded from the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant whereas other home to school transport costs are funded from the council's revenue budget.
21. The procurement process for all new contracts will need to start in September 2020 in readiness for commencement in September 2021. Discussion will commence shortly to review if any changes are required to current contract arrangements.

### **Home to School Transport Expenditure and Pupil/Student Numbers**

22. As stated previously home to school transport costs are increasing year on year.
23. In the last few years a number of different initiatives have been introduced in an attempt to reduce costs but which would have other benefits. These include personal transport budgets (PTB's) and the York Independent Living Training Scheme (YILTS).
24. PTB's were introduced to encourage parents to take responsibility for getting their children to and from school. The pupils are assessed as

being eligible for transport assistance but rather than the local authority arranging their transport the parent would transport their child. The parent would receive an annual budget based on the number of miles travelled each school year. The cost of PTB's is financially competitive when compared against the LA having to arrange transport, however parents transporting their own children to school does increase the number of vehicles on the road and adds to congestion around schools.

25. The YILTS programme trains young people to be independent travellers. The programme is currently a voluntary scheme where young people are normally referred via their school or parental requests. The young people who normally have some special needs receive one to one training from specialist staff within the YILTS team to enable them to travel independently on public transport. The length of training required is very much linked to the needs of the young person. The scheme, over the last 6 years, has resulted in approximately 230 young people being trained to become independent travellers. This has significant long term benefits for both the young person in terms of them and their independence, and development of life skills, but also for the LA in terms of savings in the cost of transport.

### **Consultation**

26. Any proposed changes to Home to School transport policy would need to follow the appropriate consultation and approval processes.

### **Analysis**

27. Where transport provision is statutory, there is no option to change policy. The requirement in this case is to ensure that that the most appropriate and cost effective quality service is provided.
28. The policy areas where transport is currently provided on a discretionary basis are subject to change, following the appropriate consultation with all necessary stakeholders including parents, pupils and schools, prior to any changes.
29. As contracts are due to be re-procured this year, it would be appropriate to consider any policy changes so that any impact can be considered in the procuring those home to school transport services.

## Options

30. In considering future options for home to school transport, members' views are welcomed in looking at alternatives to current arrangements and the possibility of trialling new ways of working to both reduce costs and maintain quality of service.

## Council Plan

*A better start for children and young people.*

31. Getting children and young people to and from school each day via the council's home to school transport arrangements is a key part of their education responsibilities. It is important therefore that the service is reliable, safe and cost effective

Getting around sustainably

32. The options available for getting children and young people to school each day needs to consider the environmental impact of those options. It is essential therefore that the council encourages use of public transport, sets targets around the types of vehicles it wants to be transporting children and young people around the city where it does have some level of control. It also enables the council to work with transport providers in partnership to cut congestion, pollution and carbon emissions

Well-paid jobs and an inclusive economy

33. As estimated out turn figures indicate for the current financial year the council is to spend approximately £3.3m on its home to school transport services. As these services are delivered by local transport contractors this provides a significant number of jobs within the local area and therefore benefits the local economy.

## Implications

34. *Please see below*

- **Financial**

See paragraph 2

- **Human Resources (HR)** (*Contact – Head of HR*)

There are no human resource implications

- **Equalities**

See Legal

- **Legal**

To meet the requirements of the 1996 Education Act in relation to the LA's duty to make travel arrangements to facilitate attendance at school. To meet the statutory requirements of the 2013 Children & Families Bill as well as the Equalities Act 2010. Legal Services will support the School Services team when drawing up contracts for the finalised arrangements when they have been agreed.

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no crime and disorder implications

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications

- **Property**

There are no property implications

- **Other**

## **Risk Management**

35. There are no risks at this stage of the scrutiny process.

## **Recommendations**

36. Members are asked to consider how they would like to progress with a scrutiny review of home to school transport.

Reason: To enable officers to prepare further work and options for members consideration

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**Wards Affected:**

**All**

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

## Abbreviations

LA	Local Authority
YILTS	York Independent Living & Travel Skills
EHCP	Education, Health & Care Plan
PTB	Personal Transport Budget
DBS	Disclosure Barring Service
CE	Church of England
CYPIC	Children & Young People in Care