

		AGENDA ITEM 6
		CYP/18/12
Committee:	Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	5 July 2012	
Home to School Transport		
Enquiries to:	Emma Toublic, Head of SCF Strategic Transport and Awards 01245 431625 or ext. 21625 emma.toublic@essex.gov.uk	

- **What must the Council provide statutorily?**

The County Council has a duty to provide transport to those children of statutory school age who are attending their nearest qualifying school provided they reside at or beyond the following distances from that school

- 2 miles or more where the child is under the age of 8
- 3 miles or more where the child is over the age of 8

All distances are measured using the shortest available walking route which is calculated using our mapping software "Routefinder".

The County Council has decided that the qualifying school to be considered for the provision of transport should be the historic admission catchment school of the address where the child resides.

Transport is also provided in the following circumstances:

- If a child resides under the distances stated above but the route which they would be required to utilise to get from home to school is unavailable to be walked, accompanied as necessary, the County Council must provide transport regardless of the distance from home to school. The child must still be attending their nearest qualifying school in order to be entitled to assistance.
- If the child is attending a school that is closer to their home address than their qualifying school and meets the distance criteria above, transport must be provided

- If the child is attending the nearest school with space available at the time of admission and the distance criteria are met transport must be provided.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a further duty on the authority around the provision of transport for those students who were considered from Low Income Families. Those children were defined as those that qualify for Free School Meals or whose families were in receipt of the maximum level working tax credit. Where this applies we must provide transport in the following circumstances:

- The child is over the age of 8 and resides 2 or more miles from their nearest qualifying school
- The child is of secondary school age and is attending one of the three nearest schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home address.
- The child is of secondary school age and attending a school for reasons of religion or belief and that school is between 2 and 15 miles from the home address.

Where a child has Special Educational Needs the definition of an eligible child is as follows:

“children unable to walk to school by reason of their SEN, disability, or mobility problems (including temporary medical conditions)”

In all cases we apply distance criteria and parents/carers must then evidence any SEN or medical condition that would warrant the provision of transport.

• **What may the Council provide on a discretionary basis?**

The County Council may choose to provide any level of transport support to children and young people on a discretionary basis. We have chosen to support some discretionary policies in addition to our statutory duties. These are:

- Post 16 students where they are attending this nearest establishment offering the course they have chosen to study, providing they reside at or beyond three miles away. A contribution of £500 is required unless the family qualify to have the charge waived.
- Post 16 SEN students attending their nearest appropriate school or the nearest college offering the course they have chosen, providing they reside at or beyond three miles from the establishment, unless they are unable to walk that distance for reasons relating to SEN/Disability/Mobility. A

contribution of £500 is required unless the family qualify to have the charge waived

- Those students from low income families choosing to attend their selective (grammar) school, provided the distance criteria for their age group are met
- Those who reside in a Joint Catchment Area for 2 or more schools are provided transport to whichever school they choose from those allocated to their address provided they meet the distance criteria (those residing in the area of the Five Parishes area of Brentwood are good example here)
- Where a child is attending a faith primary school and they are considered to be from a low income family, as defined in the Education and Inspections Act, transport will be provided.

- **How do parents know what is provided/not provided?**

Parents are made aware of the existence of home to school transport through a number of channels

- Information is circulated alongside the school admission information at the relevant times of year (both application and offer)
- Our website holds a great deal of information on the provision of home to school transport and allows parents to make an application online (www.essex.gov.uk/schooltransport) This is currently part of the work of the NWO Customer Programme and improvements will be made to this site from November 2012 onwards.
- We provide articles for school newsletters to circulate throughout the year
- We provide flyers and posters for schools to reproduce to advertise the services
- Schools across Essex will promote transport as they know where vehicles come from currently transporting entitled children and so encourage parents to make applications.
- We regularly attend open evenings at our schools and colleges to promote transport assistance offered by ECC.

- **What guidelines must a transport operator fulfil (i.e. vehicle standards; operators licences; CRB checks)?**

We have a lengthy terms and conditions of contract which can be provided on request. The basic requirements of our operators can be found on our website – I have included a Hyperlink below:

[Requirements for Operators](#)

Once we receive a request for information regarding inclusion on the Essex County Council Approved Operator List for Passenger Transport we ask that they complete our Application Form, Reference Form and Certification of Insurance Form, available on our website (link above)

They must send proof of motor Insurance and £5 million public liability (& contingency insurance if they use Hackney Carriage/ Public Hire owner drivers) as well as two references. We will check through the documentation and obtain the references (sheet attached). If they are successful at this stage, they will then be contacted and a date for a meeting will be arranged. Where we go through all the requirements and check that they have an understanding of the type of work, duties and responsibilities (see tick lists attached)

The meeting will be at County Hall, Chelmsford and will be conducted by two members of the Passenger Transport Team. Copies of HC Driver & Vehicle Licence, PH or PSV Operator licences issued by either the local District Licensing Officer or regional Traffic Commissioner must be sent prior to the meeting. It is essential that new operators have access to both a computer and the internet.

Any individual, passenger assistant or driver who is required to transport our children must have a current clear enhanced CRB check.

- **How much annually does the Council spend on transport? How is this split between primary, secondary and special sectors?**

The table below shows the end of year position for the last 3 years in the home to school

	2011/12	No of Pupils	2010/11	No of Pupils	2009/10	No of Pupils
Primary	3,868,000	2931	4,192,000	3079	4,427,000	3164
Secondary	8,429,000	12275	8,890,000	12321	9,804,000	13344
Secondary Faith	880,000	1234	1,104,000	1271	*	*
Post 16	1,919,000	2816	1,769,000	2395	2,085,000	1550
SEN	9,831,000	1977	10,802,000	2019	10,769,000	2019
SEN 16	1,645,000	344	1,800,000	349	1,914,000	383
Childrens Support Services (formally PRU's)	411,000	323	553,000	323	717,000	312
Respite	236,000		291,000		292,000	
Total	27,219,000	21900	29,401,000	21757	30,008,000	20772

transport budgets. Overall, as you can see costs have reduced significantly.
*figures not available as spend was part of overall secondary school spend until 2010/11 financial year

- **Will the extension of the school leaving age up to 18 incur extra costs?**

The Raising of Participation Age (RPA) is something we have been looking at the impact of for sometime. The DfE have confirmed there will be no change in the current statutory duty around transport and as a result there will be no

requirement for the authority to provide transport to those remaining in education, employment or training beyond the age of 16.

We have been looking at the impact of RPA. We have looked at the percentage of students in Education, Employment and Training at Post 16 age who receive transport assistance from ECC (8%). Based on the expected increase in overall cohort between now and 2015 we expect the added pressure on our Post 16 budget to be in the region of £350K. We are currently working on a paper for Cllr Castle to review in July to make recommendations on changes to our current post 16 policy that will allow us to contain this increase within current budgets whilst ensuring we are able to continue support Post 16 learners across the County.

The above figures do not include SEN.

- **What alternatives might the Council operate (i.e. cycle provision is being looked at but are there other options)?**

Personalised Transport Budgets

The concept of Personalised Transport Budgets (PTB) is to enable families to apply for all transport to one team, be assessed for all areas of potential entitlement (single assessment) and then receive a negotiated transport budget, either in the form of a direct payment, voucher, training or Essex County Council procured transport.

The PTB will be negotiated between the family and the Education Transport & Awards assessor, according to a set framework that puts all transport options into order from greatest independence and lowest cost, through to low independence and high cost. In doing so, the PTB project aims to shift the service that ET&A offers to a model of personalisation.

Options that could be provided as part of the Personalised Transport Plan include the following:

- Travel Training – Individual and Buddying Scheme (inc. lowering the age we train from)
- Considering the use of DLA (Mobility) Vehicles
- Cycle Scheme – Purchase of equipment, training, cycle routes, volunteers riders and preferred suppliers of equipment
- Reimbursement – Individual and joint travelling
- ‘Travel Buddies’
- Walking Bus
- Escort review
- Route Optimisation
- Re-integration/Integration – 1:1 onto shared vehicles/use of larger vehicles

- Purchase of a suitable buggy or wheelchair
- Paying families to procure their own contract transport; according to set price structure
- Retaining the use of ECC to procure transport ('as-is' process)

This project will help to align the local authorities transport provision with the government's vision for personalisation, localism and the objectives set out in the SEND Green Paper. Essex has been granted pilot status for SEN Direct Payments.

This project is currently being taken forward to FBC.

Mileage payments

In September 2010 we implemented an alternative transport payment to reimburse parents for taking their own children to school where there was an entitlement. We have targeted SEN groups with this initiative as often their journeys are very costly and owing to the number of children we transport they can often be lengthy and the pick up and drop of times inflexible for families. This offer has been taken up by several families who would have liked the opportunity to take their children to school but were not able to afford to do this themselves.

- **May / does the Council assist parents in setting up bussing/coaching arrangements?**

We do not currently offer this service. We do offer services along these lines to schools and colleges to procure transport on their behalf for school trips etc. This has not been extended to parents currently but is something that can be looked into in the future.

- **Does the Council have any proposals in mind upon which the Committee could comment?**

Systematic Review of Passenger Transport.

As part of the wider Systematic Review project Passenger Transport has been a chosen topic. Business cases are with outcomes board and include the review of Community Link, Local Bus, Contracts and Personalisation, as described above.

Post 16 Transport

Post 16 Transport is currently under review with a paper due to be submitted to Cllr Castle in July for consideration and potential consultation on change to be carried out during the Autumn Term 2012 and a final decision on the best way forward to be taken by Council by the end of the year.

Travel Training

Development of a Travel Training Strategy to link in with implications of All Age Service and ensure we reach as many clients as possible with the service we are currently offering.

www.essex.gov.uk/traveltraining