

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 10 June 2021

Report of the Head of Service Inclusion

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Approval to Carry Out a Wider Consultation on the SEND Home to School Transport Policy

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

The SEND Home to School Transport Policy was last reviewed and updated in 2013/14 and now requires a review and update. The authority recognises the importance of the views of children and young people with SEND and their families, and wishes to seek their views and the views of other stakeholders in reviewing and updating the policy.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve, for wider consultation, the draft SEND Home to School Transport Policy as set out at Appendix 'A'.

Background and Advice

Lancashire County Council, in common with other councils across the UK, faces significant budget challenges across all its core operations, as well as the need to maintain the quality and flexibility of services provided. A review of passenger transport was identified as an opportunity to establish the efficiency and effectiveness of the current service, and to identify options for financial and quality improvements.

In 2019, Edge Public Sector Solutions carried out a review of Lancashire County Council's Passenger Transport & Fleet Services and, in July 2019, presented their findings. This review highlighted that the SEND Home to School transport policy was last reviewed in 2013/14 and therefore required a full review and update.

The SEND Home to School Transport Policy covers the authorities' statutory duty in relation to the provision of transport for children and young people, 0 to 16 years old, with an Education, Health and Care plan, from home to their educational placement.

In conducting a review and update of the policy, Edge Public Sector Solutions made a number of recommendations to be included in the review of the SEND transport policy:

- The emphasis of the policy should be 'Travel Assistance' rather than transport, to allow a range of journey options to be offered and, in particular, to overhaul and relaunch the travel training service.
- This would be achieved by the offer of independent travel training as an integral part of the policy, grouped pick up points (usually at bus stops) and encouraging walking or cycling with supervision as appropriate.
- The option to offer favourable mileage payments to parents who are willing to take their children to school would be a useful tool, particularly where the child needs a single occupancy taxi, or where the child is the only child attending the school. This has already been successfully utilised under temporary COVID arrangements, with more than 30 families taking up the payments.
- The Integrated Transport Service needs to be much more actively involved in the decision-making process regarding the allocation of transport and the changing requirements of children as they develop through school life.
- The periodic review of transport offered should be conducted by the Integrated Transport Service, schools and parents/carers.

The Inclusion Service and Integrated Transport Service have jointly worked on a draft Home to School Transport Policy for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, addressing the recommendations made by Edge Public Sector Solutions.

The main changes in the draft Policy are:

- The delivery of a structured independent travel training programme has been incorporated into the policy and, as appropriate, will be promoted as the long term means of providing transport, once a child/young person is travel trained and has been provided with a free/subsidised travel pass.
- Parents are required to do all that is reasonable to support their child in getting to school and, for pupils that are mobile but where parents request transport due to their child's behavioural issues, support will be provided to the parents to support them in accompanying their child.
- A discretionary Travel Assistance Grant has been introduced to incentivise parents to transport their own children, where this is possible.

The views of children and young people with SEND, their families and other stakeholders will be sought as part of the consultation in reviewing and updating the SEND Home to School Transport Policy.

Integrated Transport Service staff will conduct a rigorous periodic review of the transport provided, in consultation with schools and parents.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

There are no significant risks arising from the proposals in the report.

Financial

The service has previously agreed savings of c£1.3m to deliver relating to transport for children and young people with SEND. The policy changes proposed within the report are expected to deliver c£200,000 towards the achievement of those savings.

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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A