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<b>Report title:</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Travel Assistance Funding update	
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## Executive Summary

This report provides the Schools Forum with a service update following the implementation of operational changes and introduction of a new service model for delivery of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) travel assistance service in 2015-16 which is funded by a contribution from the Schools Budget of the Dedicated Schools Grant combined with Southwark's own Core funding.

## Schools Forum Actions

The Schools Forum is asked to note:

- the outcomes for the funding centrally retained within the high needs block of £0.8m as approved by the Schools Forum and the Secretary of State.
- the demand pressures within SEN which leads to additional costs pressures to the core budget of the Council.

## 1 Background

- 1.1 Local Authorities (LAs) have a statutory duty to provide school travel assistance to eligible children and young people in need of additional support to travel to and from school / place of learning for children and young people across the 0-25 age range.
- 1.2 Southwark's Travel Assistance (TA) Team manages external bus and taxi transport contracts providing vehicles and drivers for all routes along with passenger assistants (in addition to those employed by Southwark Council) where required. In addition, the TA team provides:
- A comprehensive, independent travel training (ITT) programme for youngsters with in-house travel trainers.
  - An eligibility and application process which includes face to face assessments
  - Access to intervention from Early Help services when needed to support families to get their children to school themselves.
  - A range of travel support information and services to help families – e.g. safest walking route planning, access to bicycle training and various funded travel schemes.

- 1.3 The aim of the travel assistance service is to extend direct contact with schools and families to ensure that every child's travel needs are frequently reviewed and where appropriate, he/she is offered independent travel training support thus reducing their dependence on vehicles and adding value to their overall social independence and well-being.

## **2. Southwark SEND travel assistance service**

- 2.1 Currently, 600 Southwark children and young people receive support from the council to enable them to travel to and from their school each day. The majority travel in a vehicle suited to their needs but an increasing number are able to be offered an opportunity to participate in our independent travel training (ITT) programme.
- 2.2 A team of ten independent travel trainers were established in November 2015 following a successful pilot of Southwark's ITT scheme. The role requires each trainer to undertake the 'Training the Trainers' two-day ITT Accredited Course. On successful completion, trainers pair up for around half a term to take children and young people on their journeys before they are passed as ready to commence one to one travel training. Regular reports and logs are submitted on progress of the trainees and for the majority of pupils the course is complete within eight weeks.
- 2.3 We have a comprehensive eight-week travel training programme for young people, over 35 have registered an interest to start and 15 young people have successfully completed training during 2015-16. In addition, the team worked extensively with Newlands academy on a bespoke package of travel training which enabled the 12 children predominantly with EBD travelling to school in a SEND transport vehicle to be supported to travel independently.
- 2.4 This produced a saving of £57k per academic year on transport costs for the cost of vehicles and crew as we now have no children in receipt of travel assistance (vehicles or ITT) at this school. We have recently negotiated a similar travel training package for children and families at Beormund primary school which will commence in April 2017.
- 2.5 Completion of the programme has not only enabled these children/young people to travel to school/college independently on public transport but has helped to boost confidence and provides youngsters with an opportunity to interact with other young people and travel with their fellow students without having to wait for an adult. Our travel training programme complements existing general travel support provided across several special schools.
- 2.6 Travel assistance staff carry out an annual review (in conjunction with school based staff) of pupils at Highshore, Tuke and Spa special schools to identify potential candidates for the programme, we currently have 13 pupils on our ITT list for January 2017. ITT does not always produce a direct financial saving as children in receipt are often on a bus so a reduction in price is not achieved however, this does relieve pressure on capacity.

- 2.7 In the longer term, it is envisaged that we will be able to support increasing numbers of children and young people to become better prepared for their transition into adulthood. Southwark’s travel assistance strategy has been extended across the 0-25 age range, supported by joined up direct working across Children’s, Transition and Adults’ services.
- 2.8 We will be contacting schools shortly to work with our TA team to publicise and deliver an outreach programme for early 2017 to encourage parents/carers and children to find out more about ITT. Families will have an opportunity to ask questions, meet the team/trainers and also, to sign up for a ‘taster’ session, where a child/young person and the parent/carers would go out with a trainer for a session.

**3. Funding**

- 3.1 The gross expenditure and funding of the service is set out on the table below.

	Core £000s	Grant £000s	Income £000s	DSG £000s	Total Funding £000s	Total Forecast £000s	Variance £000s
Transport Costs	3,127	108	18	800	4,054	5,064	1,010

- 3.2 The 2016-17 benchmarking showed that Southwark’s spend per pupil population at £87 versus a statistical neighbour average of £74 and the all England average of £64.

**4 SEND pressures on the service**

- 4.1 Whilst the DSG contribution to SEN Home to School Transport is currently capped at £0.8m, the Council’s core budget is under pressure by c£0.9m. This largely flows from the increase in SEN and, particularly the increased number of out of borough residential placements with SEN, and is a trend that is being mirrored across the Country. The Council is tackling additional SEN capacity within the borough with a large capital investment programme in new and additional provision in the borough to head off these pressures.
- 4.2 The overall number of children in receipt of travel assistance has been increasing for several years, the snapshot below taken on 1 December 2015 and 2016 shows an overall increase of 55 children in Southwark. All applications are assessed rigorously against eligibility criteria and include meeting with the family where necessary to clarify any areas unclear in the paper application. This increase in demand is common across local authorities. As members of the CIPFA SEN Benchmarking club we can bring back data relating to transport trends to a future meeting of Schools Forum as required.

## Number of children in receipt of travel assistance (snapshot)

Current mode of transport	Children with travel assistance - December 2015	Children with travel assistance - December 2016
Bus	366	374
Taxi	110	141
ITT	10	10
Direct payments	26	38
Recoupment for Southwark LAC residing outside of the borough	33	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>600</b>

- 4.3 The DSG funding and the initiative that it supports is vital in ensuring that the overall budget provides value for money and that the best outcomes are achieved for the children and young people, in particular with regard to promoting independence and building resilience for key transitions.

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