

<b>Date:</b> 19 January 2017	<b>Item</b> 8	<b>Type of report:</b> For Decision
<b>Report title:</b>	Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Travel Assistance Funding	
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### Executive Summary

This report requests that the Schools Forum agree to the allocation of an additional £0.5m to the existing £0.8m) in 2017-18 from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) travel assistance service.

### Schools Forum Actions

The Schools Forum is asked whether to agree in 2017-18 up to an additional £0.5m to the existing £0.8m from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) travel assistance service.

If agreed by Schools Forum, this would still be subject to a formal approval by the Secretary of State.

## 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 The travel assistance service report to Schools Forum in December 2016 gave details of the current team and how children are being supported to access independent travel training which as well as getting children to and from school each day, is able to support increasing numbers of children and young people to become better prepared for their transition into adulthood.

## 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.
- 2.2 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. This increase in demand is common across local authorities and adds considerable pressure on the Council's core budget.

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>

**3 Funding**

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

	Core	Grant	Income	DSG	Total Funding	Total Forecast	Variance
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	s	s	s	s	s	s	s
Transport Costs	3,127	108	18	800	4,054	5,064	1,010

**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 about £0.9m. This largely due to 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, although this will take time to put in

place through the agreed capital programme, the majority of which is supported by significant Council core budget funding rather than DFE grant which is focussed upon school expansion for basic need provision within the Primary and Secondary phases. With additional in borough capacity for SEN this will help to contain transport costs in future by meeting needs locally.

- 4.2 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. With additional pressures flowing from demand it is vital to gear up for additional investment in travel assistance in the future to ensure that higher additional transport costs contained as early as possible for children and young people with SEND, working in partnership with parents and schools. This support will also ensure that the Council can continue to invest in additional capital resources being put in place to increase SEN provision within the borough, rather than diverting resources into travel assistance training and potentially delaying the vital SEND places coming on stream in future. This is also set against the context of reductions in the Council's budget and grants more generally.

## 5. Financial and Legislative Background

- 5.1 The legislative requirements regarding SEND Transport and DSG Funding are set out in The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2014. SEND Transport is an item of expenditure in Schedule 2 PART 1 that can be deducted from the Schools Budget of a local authority in order to determine the Individual Schools Budget.
- 5.2 Paragraph 5 of this schedule also states that any deductions of this nature cannot exceed the amount deducted in the previous year
- 5.3 Regulation 25, however, allows for the following:
- “on application by a local authority, the Secretary of State may authorise an authority to disregard the limits referred to in paragraph 5 of schedule 2.”***
- 5.4 In line with the 2016-17, if granted, it allows the Local Authority to charge the Schools Budget with a contribution towards SEND Transport.
- 5.5 Other Local Authorities have for a number of years charged elements of SEND Transport to the Schools Budget.
- 5.6 Whilst technically the deadline for such disregards has passed for 2017-18, the DFE/EFA may be able to approve an exceptional case if the Schools Forum was supportive and it was a strong case. If this was not possible for 2017-18 it may be feasible for 2018-19 should the flexibilities still be in place with the new national funding arrangements.

## **6 Proposal**

- 6.1 The additional investment in travel assistance training programme of up to £0.5m would be funded from the increased flexibility from the 2017-18 high needs block DSG allocation as noted elsewhere on the agenda.
- 6.2 The next step following the School Forum's decision would be for the Authority to look at the feasibility of submitting a case to the Secretary of State requesting that the relevant limits in the regulations are formally "disregarded" to allow additional SEND transport Costs to be charged to the Schools budget/ High Needs Block. This case would no doubt be strengthened with the approval of the Schools Forum.

## **7 Schools Forum Action**

- 7.1 The Schools Forum is asked to approve the proposal to charge up to an additional £0.5m of SEND Transport Costs to the DSG high needs block from 2017-18 and support the local Authority's request to the Secretary of State to grant the necessary legislative approvals for this contribution to increase from the existing level.