

SEN Transport in London: Current and emerging practice

Guide for Practitioners



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Executive Summary

Introduction

The number of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has risen dramatically in London over the past five years. Since 2014, London has seen a 31 per cent increase in the number of children and young people with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This is putting considerable pressure on services for children and young people with SEND across the system, including SEN transport services, which are responsible for ensuring travel arrangements for eligible young people with SEND to and from their education setting. As demand increases across the capital, places in local special and mainstream schools are becoming scarcer, leading to growing numbers of children with SEND travelling greater distances to go to school. The increase in volume, as well as longer travel distances, is creating significant budgetary strain for the London boroughs. In 2018/19, SEN transport services reported a collective overspend across 30 London boroughs of £21 million.

London Councils has undertaken quantitative and qualitative research to identify successful approaches to meeting statutory responsibilities and generating savings in SEN transport, which are set out in this report. A total of ten boroughs¹ were involved in the qualitative research, through a series of interviews, representing a range of different areas of London. These boroughs were identified as areas of potential good practice, where savings had been generated in particular areas without a loss of quality to services. However, these boroughs were also largely typical of the majority in terms of having to manage increasing demand and costs, with the accumulated overspend on SEN transport budgets across these ten boroughs amounting to almost £5.5 million in 2018/19. Two of the ten boroughs had an underspend. The interviews helped to identify successful initiatives and further opportunities for boroughs to work collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and reduce spend in SEN transport across London. London Councils will be exploring these opportunities further with the boroughs as part of the next steps in taking this work forward.

Independent Travel Training (ITT)

The boroughs that run ITT recognise that there are two main benefits of the programme: increased independence for young people with SEND, and longer-term savings. A number of boroughs raised the issue of the lack of quality providers in the market, and those that were seen to be good had long waiting lists. For some boroughs, these reasons had led them to bring their ITT programmes back in-house, which had created better relationships with parents and young people, leading to more young people with SEND participating in ITT and cost savings. The boroughs would welcome London Councils working to increase the pool of ITT providers in London and to support more joined-up approaches.

Reimbursement of travel costs

Reimbursement provides parents with funding to organise their child's transport to school. In many cases, this helps the child become more independent and allows families more choice and flexibility in how they support their child to get to school. It can also generate savings, for example, if a parent travels on public transport with their child rather than getting a taxi, although the choice of transport a family makes depends on published criteria.

It is important to communicate the benefits of reimbursements to parents to ensure they understand how to use them to access transport and how to manage the process to ensure they receive full

¹ Bi-borough (Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea), Camden, Croydon, Lambeth, Merton, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth. Barking & Dagenham also provided information.

reimbursement. Monitoring of the usage of reimbursements is crucial to realise savings. For example, recovering funding for non-attendance days can save significant amounts of money.

Pick up points

Some boroughs have successfully introduced pick up points for children and young people with SEND, who use their services. This helps to reduce travel time on buses, often significantly, therefore improving outcomes for children and young people; saving costs on fuel and staff time; and reducing air pollution and congestion. However, some boroughs have chosen not to implement pick up points due to concerns about lack of suitable sites, particularly in inner London boroughs, and the view that savings generated are not likely to be significant enough to justify the level of change. The boroughs that use pick up points in the local area recognise the importance of communicating regularly with parents and ensuring they are supportive of the approach.

Boroughs were also interested in exploring the option of route sharing, where multiple boroughs coordinate journeys for young people travelling along the same routes. This could help to reduce travel times, improve outcomes, realise savings and reduce the environmental impact of buses on the local area.

Other emerging good practice

- **Shared framework for private hire vehicles:**
A few boroughs have set up a joint framework to generate savings.
- **Good procurement practice:**
It is important to build in both quality and price to ensure good value for money, as well as considering different price models, depending on whether the cohort of children and young people accessing transport services is growing.
- **Communication with parents and elected members:**
It is essential to build in time to consult with both core groups as part of the implementation of any changes.
- **Linking with adult social care:**
Some boroughs have taken innovative approaches to working with adult social care, such as sharing buses with different client groups.
- **Annual reviews for SEN transport:**
This helps to keep services relevant, minimising disruption and creating efficiencies.

Recommendations

London local government should work collaboratively to:

1. Identify, design and deliver more shared bus routes across London boroughs, exploring innovative technological solutions, to reduce travel times for children and young people, generate savings for boroughs and reduce air pollution.
2. Discuss with TfL the need to provide more SEN training for bus drivers and to raise public awareness of children and young people with SEND on public transport.
3. Lobby government to make it a statutory requirement for families in receipt of either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) with a mobility component or with a Motability car, that this must be used for the child or young person's home to education transport.

4. Work together to establish more capacity for Independent Travel Training across London to meet growing need.

5. Explore options to develop shared frameworks for private hire vehicles across sub-regions of London Boroughs.

London Councils will explore how to take these recommendations forward, but the success of this work will rely on collaborative efforts across boroughs to implement change.

Introduction

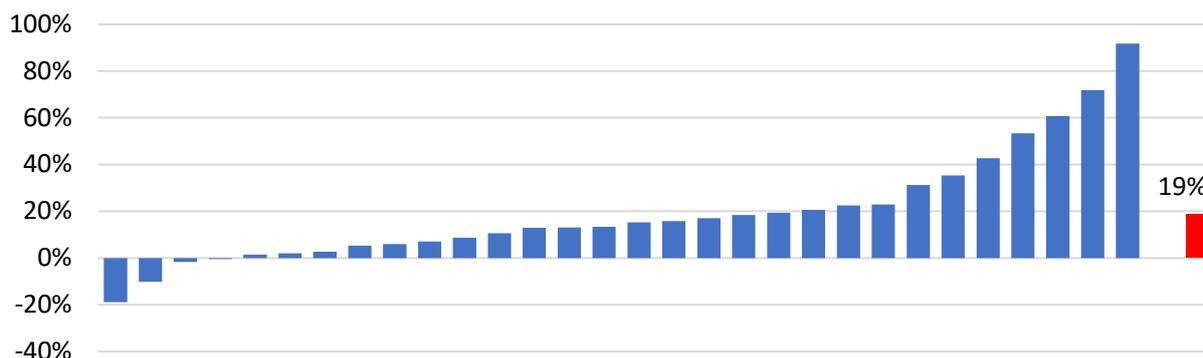
Over the past four years, London has seen a considerable increase in the number of children and young people identified with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In London, there has been a 31 per cent increase in children and young people with EHCPs between 2014/15 and 2017/18,² from 41,000 children and young people with EHCPs to 54,000.

This increase has put considerable strain on SEND services, including SEN transport, where funding has struggled to keep pace with demand. London Councils has identified that across 28 boroughs returning data, SEN transport spend increased by 13 per cent over two years between 2016/17 and 2018/19.

These pressures continue, with overspend on SEN transport amounting to £21 million in 2018/19 from 30 boroughs. This is equivalent to 19 per cent of overall budgets. Across all boroughs who responded to the survey, spend ranged from 19 per cent underspend to 92 per cent overspend (as shown in figure 1). Overall, 18 boroughs are overspending by 10 per cent or more.

Figure 1: SEN transport overspend/underspend in 2018/19 (as a % of budget)

Sample: 30 boroughs



London Councils has been lobbying, along with other professional networks in London, to secure more funding for the high-needs block and SEN transport budgets to help boroughs’ cope with this rising pressure. In September 2019, the Chancellor announced an extra £700 million (12 per cent) for the high-needs block across England, which amounts to a 10.4 per cent increase in high-needs block funding for London. However, this is only for one year and this funding is not for SEN transport services.

As well as campaigning for more resources, London Councils has also published research into good practice in terms of promoting inclusive practice in mainstream schools. We recognise the importance of all schools supporting children and young people with SEND, where this meets the children’s needs. However, with rising cost pressures and increased performance measures, some schools have been discouraging children and young people with SEND from attending their school or off-rolling³ them later. The lack of inclusion in mainstream schools can have a negative impact on the outcomes of many

² <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/our-key-themes/children-and-young-people/funding-pressures>

³ Ofsted’s definition: *Off-rolling is the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, when the removal is primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This includes pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school roll.*

children and young people with SEND. It also has a knock-on impact in terms of SEN transport services, with children travelling longer distances to access out of borough specialist provision. London Councils will continue to promote inclusive practice as the default option in all mainstream schools.

Given the significant demand and cost pressures facing SEN transport services across London, London Councils undertook a benchmarking exercise in December 2018. Nineteen London boroughs responded to the survey and this benchmarking activity helped to identify several areas of emerging practice. London Councils undertook qualitative research, in the form of interviews with SEN transport leads in selected boroughs, between January-July 2019 with the following two aims:

- To identify and explore successful approaches to meeting statutory responsibilities, while reducing spend on SEN transport budgets in the London boroughs (for children and young people up to the age of 25), considering whether these approaches could be replicable to other boroughs.
- To make recommendations on how London Councils and other organisations can support boroughs to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEN as cost efficiently as possible.

A total of ten boroughs⁴ were involved in this research, representing a range of different areas of London. The interviews helped to identify successful initiatives undertaken to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and reduce spend in SEN transport across London, which are showcased in this report.

This report sets out the findings from both the benchmarking analysis and interviews, focusing on three key areas for potential activity: independent travel training, direct payments and pick up points. The report also picks up on other service changes that could impact service delivery positively, such as policies in relation to post-16, taxi cancellation and good procurement practice. A set of recommendations emerged through the qualitative interviews proposing how the boroughs and London Councils could take forward this agenda to generate further improvements and savings. London Councils will explore how to take these recommendations forward, but the success of this work will rely on collaborative efforts across boroughs to implement change.

The report is intended as an aid to SEN transport teams across the capital to help them to make changes to their service delivery to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and make savings.

Travel assistance for children and young people with SEND in London

London Councils' undertook a benchmarking exercise to understand trends in provision of SEN transport across London, as well as identifying pockets of variation.

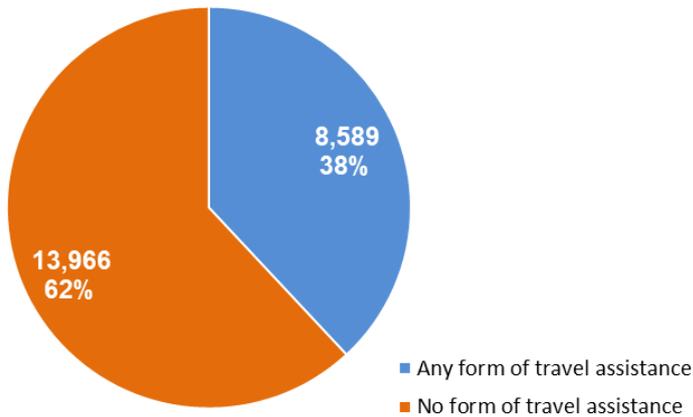
Firstly, we collated data on the total number of children and young people with an EHCP, who receive any form of travel assistance. Figure 2 shows that 38 per cent of 0-16 year olds (8,589) and 43 per cent of 16-25 year olds (2,267) with an EHCP receive some form of travel assistance across 17 boroughs in London.

Figure 2 – Proportion of young people with an EHCP receiving travel assistance

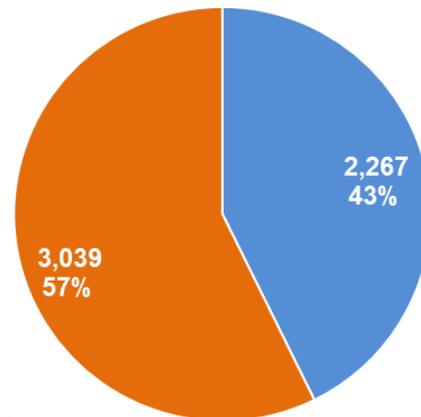
<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2019/05/10/what-is-off-rolling-and-how-does-ofsted-look-at-it-on-inspection/>

⁴ Bi-borough (Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea), Camden, Croydon, Lambeth, Merton, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth. Barking and Dagenham also provided information.

0-16 year olds
Total number of EHCPs: 22,555



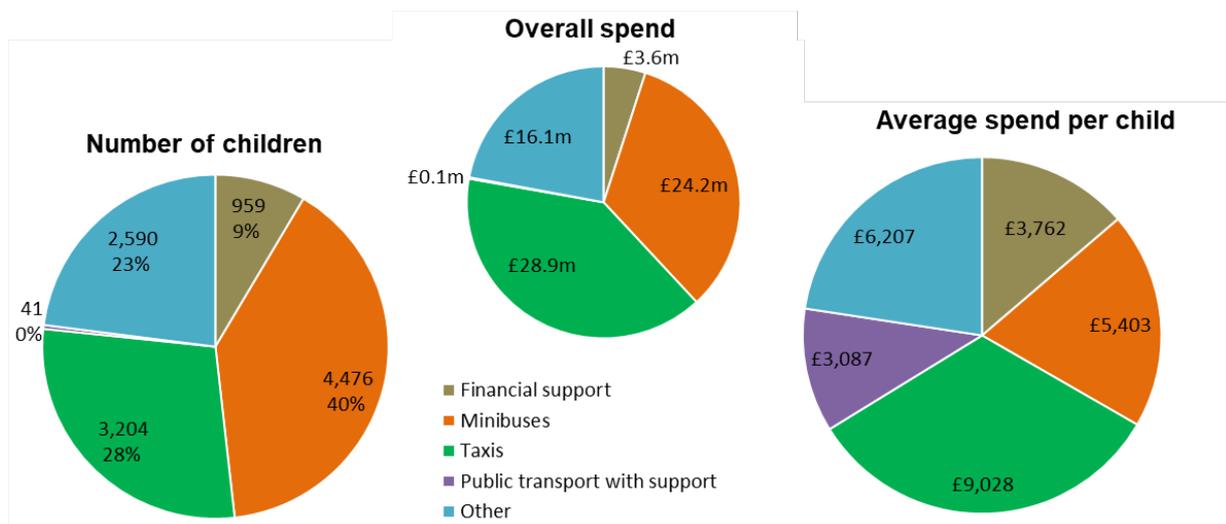
FE (16-25 year olds)
Total number of EHCPs: 5,306



Sample: 17 boroughs

The type of travel assistance provided to young people with an EHCP varies across the boroughs. Of the 19 boroughs that provided data, the majority of children are provided with travel assistance through minibus services (37 per cent). Taxis account for 28 per cent of assistance for young people with an EHCP and financial support (direct payments, travel budgets or reimbursement of travel costs) account for nine per cent. Overall, more is spent on taxi services, with a higher average spend per child on a taxi service (£9,028) than any other type of travel assistance. This is two-thirds higher than the average spend on minibuses, reflecting the higher ratios of child to adult in taxis. Figure 3 shows the number of children who were provided with different types of travel assistance and the amount spent on each form of travel assistance.

Figure 3 – Type of travel assistance for young people with an EHCP receiving travel assistance



Sample: 18 boroughs

There is considerable variation amongst boroughs in terms of spend and practice. London Councils decided to conduct qualitative interviews to further investigate why boroughs had taken different approaches and what had been successful in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people and reducing costs for SEN transport.

Emerging themes for best practice

Independent Travel Training (ITT)

Across the 11 boroughs providing data, the number of children with EHCPs enrolled on ITT increased by nine per cent from 2016/17 to 2017/18, and the number who completed travel training increased by three per cent over the same period. Table 1 presents the total number of children with EHCPs who have enrolled or completed travel training for 2016/17 and 2017/18 across the boroughs who have supplied data.

Table 1 – Number of children with EHCPs enrolled or completed travel training from 2016/17 to 2017/18

	Enrolled on travel training			Completed travel training		
	2016/17	2017/18	Change 16/17 to 17/18	2016/17	2017/18	Change 16/17 to 17/18
Number of children with EHCPs	303	329	9%	152	156	3%

Sample: 11 boroughs

Across the boroughs, eligibility criteria for travel training varies, and includes (out of 16 borough responses):

- The age of the pupil (7 boroughs)
- Some form of assessment (7 boroughs)
- The same as eligibility for travel assistance/SEND transport (5 boroughs)
- Distance to school (2 boroughs)
- A referral from a local charity (1 borough)
- Capacity based (1 borough)
- No criteria (2 boroughs)

Benefits of independent travel training

The boroughs that run ITT recognise that there are two main benefits to the programme: increasing independence for young people with SEND and realising longer-term savings. For many, the first benefit was the most significant as it empowered young people and helped them to secure a successful transition to adulthood. Many young people, who had successfully completed an ITT course, experienced a real confidence boost and are now going out independently at weekends to see friends and family. Independent travel also opened up wider opportunities to them, such as choice of different colleges and employment options.

Shortage of providers

The benchmarking exercise revealed that only 12 out of 19 boroughs are currently able to provide travel training to all eligible children and young people, which suggests that there is currently a shortage of ITT across London. Discussions with individual boroughs have revealed that the lack of ITT being delivered across London is largely a result of a shortage in high-quality providers.

A number of boroughs raised the issue of the lack of quality providers in the market and high levels of demand for providers recognised as high quality. Some external providers have high turnover of staff,

which suggests that they may not have adequate training in place or are not recruiting people with the appropriate skills set.

As a result, some boroughs have decided to bring ITT back in-house. As well as establishing better relationships with parents and young people, leading to a greater uptake of young people on ITT, the boroughs interviewed that had moved in-house had also realised cost savings. Having supportive senior managers was identified as a crucial factor for a successful in-house ITT service, as managers have to trust the professionalism of the travel trainers and enable them to tailor support to meet individual needs.

Key learning points

- The majority of boroughs interviewed favoured in-house provision, and some had established high-quality, in-house services (see Croydon case study below). This can deliver key benefits to young people with SEND and realise savings.
- Whichever type of provider used, it is important to establish a strong, consistent relationship with the young people undertaking the training in order to achieve a successful outcome. Recruiting travel trainers who have experience with young people with SEND, such as teaching assistants from special schools, or young people with SEND who have successfully completed travel training, helps to strengthen the relationship between young person and travel trainer.
- Warm-up events for young people identified as potential candidates for ITT are an important way of engaging with young people and assessing whether they are ready to undertake the training. It is equally important to engage with parents to secure their support for ITT.
- Providing a clear ITT offer every year to the same age cohort can help to manage numbers and ensure a positive transition to secondary school (see Tower Hamlets case study below).
- Being flexible about the age at which young people can try ITT is important to the success of the programme, enabling more young people to benefit from ITT over time. Also, allowing young people to try again if they do not complete the training on their first attempt is important in terms of fostering their independence and improving outcomes.
- There is scope for boroughs to work together on ITT to share staff and generate savings. Croydon currently runs ITT for Sutton. A similar model could be used to establish joint services elsewhere in London.
- TfL works hard to make its network accessible to children and young people with SEND, but some encounter difficulties with bus drivers and members of the general public. It is important that boroughs raise these issues directly with TfL to deal with any issues with individual staff. But London Councils could also take this forward with TfL directly to ensure a consistent approach is being taken across London.

Case studies:

Tower Hamlets – Independent Travel Training

In 2004, Tower Hamlets commissioned an external provider to run a pilot Independent Travel Training (ITT) scheme. It was successful, but the local authority wanted more control over the training. Therefore, they decided to bring the training in-house. The borough employed two travel trainers to design and develop a programme and start the training.

The team's continued success has resulted in the council winning two National Awards for their travel training programme Award for Community Facing Services and Outstanding Service Team of the Year (CIPFA).

The policy is clear at Tower Hamlets: travel training is the default and annual reassessments of all students on transport are mandatory. In April of Year 6, every child with an EHCP in a mainstream primary school is invited to an ITT workshop. Schools can also bring children on SEN support instead of an EHCP, who they feel would benefit from the workshop. Approximately 120 children per year are invited, and usually between 80 and 100 attend. The half-day workshop is an introduction to travel training, consisting of a bus journey discussing personal safety and a local walk discussing road safety. The travel trainers deliver the workshop. They use this as an opportunity to assess all the children and to note which children would not be suitable for travel training.

After this event, if the trainers are satisfied that a child will be suitable for travel training, then parents will be contacted to ask how they intend to get their children to school when they start at secondary. If they do not plan to take their children themselves, then travel training will be the default option. Transport will only be offered for these children if they have tried travel training and this has not been a success.

Travel training takes place the summer before Year 7 (end of July to end of August). The accredited trainers work on a one-to-one basis with the students on their journey to their new secondary school, either by walking or public transport. During the training, the travel trainer constantly assesses the student. If, during the sessions, they identify that the training will not be suitable for the child, then alternative transport will be offered. Most children will be ready to travel to school by themselves when the new term starts. For those who aren't quite ready, transport may be offered temporarily, and training will continue through the first few weeks of term.

Trainers see five to six students a day over the summer period. Schedules are organised by geographical area. Students are shadowed for three to four weeks after they complete travel training by a different trainer on their journey to and from school. If the child is seen travelling successfully independently, and their parents agree, then the travel training process is complete. If an issue is identified, the child will receive more training and shadowing. This process will continue until the child is either confident about travelling independently, or a decision is made that they are not ready for independent travel.

For those students who are offered travel support in the form of home to school transport, there is an annual assessment to see whether they are ready for ITT. The Tower Hamlets travel trainers go into schools to do these assessments.

The council has set up different arrangements for its special schools:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) special school:

This school has its own travel trainer, who will refer students if she feels that they may be able to travel from home to school on their own.

- Multiple learning difficulties school:

Travel training is not deemed to be suitable for these students.

- Emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD):

Students at this school will also have annual assessments to see whether they are suitable for travel training.

- Out of borough schools:

Sometimes these schools will refer Tower Hamlets students for travel training, but this is rare – because students going out of borough will generally have more profound SEND.

For those students who apply for transport later, rather than before starting year 7, a one-to-one assessment would take place to see if travel training would be suitable. There is currently a waiting list for older students needing training.

Impact on cost

The council set up in house ITT to realise savings and it is confident that it has done this. It is difficult to quantify how much has been saved given that minibuses still take other children to school. However, the council estimates that ITT saved them approximately £448,000 in 2017/18.

Croydon – In-house Independent Travel Training

Croydon had experienced a number of problems with their external provider of ITT, particularly around poor initial engagement with families. In August 2016, the council took the decision to bring the service back in-house. They transferred four travel trainers, one co-ordinator, and agency staff. As part of the transfer they took the opportunity to restructure the service, changing staff and expanding the team to 8.5 travel trainers. The council offers training and accreditation to their travel trainers.

A personal travel planner meets with families individually to develop a travel plan for every young person eligible for travel assistance. The travel plan has clear outcomes and targets attached to it. The outcomes aim to support young people towards independence, where possible. And the targets are focused around specific activity to help young people towards their outcomes, for example road safety training. The personal travel planner constantly monitors progress along the way to independence and develops an ongoing relationship with the young person. Transport is contingent on engagement with the service and the council works hard with families to communicate the offer and overcome any concerns.

Promotion of ITT

The service promotes ITT through a range of different methods: leaflets designed with a behavioural science team working for the local authority to ensure they communicate effectively with young people with SEND (see Appendix A); parents' evenings; visits to schools; video testimonials to persuade young people to try out ITT; "getting to know you" sessions with a travel trainer and celebration events for young people on completion of ITT.

They also work closely with all local special schools, who help to promote the benefits of ITT to parents and young people.

Benefits

The in-house service has developed much better relationships with parents than the previous external provider. The council has been able to ensure greater stability in the team which translates to more consistency and, therefore, better outcomes for young people.

Thanks to more young people with SEND participating in ITT, the council generated significant savings. Given that currently there are over 1,200 young people eligible for SEN transport in Croydon, and that demand has been growing, ITT has become an important part of Croydon's offer, delivering both cost savings and improved independence to help with long-term outcomes for young people with SEND. Between 2016-2018, the council estimates that it has made around £2 million savings against initial assessments.

Joint service

Croydon has also been providing its ITT service to Sutton for the past five years. They use the same staff in both boroughs but Sutton retains responsibility for all transport services. Croydon would be interested in rolling out their service to other boroughs.

Apprenticeships

The council is currently looking at apprenticeships as a way of expanding their travel trainer cohort. Last year the council had two student interns with SEND, one of whom has since joined the service as a business support apprentice. The borough is now considering whether social care apprentices could be converted to travel trainers. The borough recognises that young people who have undertaken travel training successfully are particularly good advocates for ITT and want to be able to recruit them into the service via apprenticeships.

Providing a service for adults

The council provides a service for adult clients at a cost. Recently, the team has met with NHS representatives from GP practices to look at how they can support clients to greater independence through a traded service. This has already led to some adult referrals.

Bi-borough - Special school pilot with Teaching Assistants

The bi-borough (Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea) have over one hundred referrals to ITT ready-to-go. They have set up a pilot in one special school, where they have supported three teaching assistants become travel trainers. The students already have an established relationship with the teaching assistants, which encourages students to engage with the programme. They are now recruiting two full time travel trainers to work in the SEN team to roll out the training more widely.

Newham – Three-day safer travel programme

Newham works closely with TfL and the Metropolitan Police, who embed a three-day safer travel programme into Newham's ITT. The programme involves using a bus on a registered route and works with the Police, TfL bus drivers and ticket inspectors. The council uses the programme to assess whether students are ready for independent travel.

Reimbursement of travel costs

Benefits of reimbursement

Reimbursement provides parents with funding to organise their child’s transport to school. In many cases, this helps the child become more independent and allows families more choice in how they support their child to get to school. It also generates savings, for example if a parent travels on public transport with their child, rather than getting a taxi, although the choice of transport a family makes depends on published criteria.

The use of reimbursement of travel costs across London

There are three main ways that councils currently provide families with reimbursement for travel costs:

- Direct payments – negotiated payments that let families choose and buy travel services from any provider
- Travel budgets - agreed budgets, which allow clients to make their own transport arrangements
- Direct reimbursement of travel costs for transport services

Of the 17 boroughs that supplied data, just over a third (six) provide a combination of all three types of reimbursement, with almost a quarter (four) offering only direct payments, four offering travel budgets and three offering reimbursements of travel costs. Two out of the 17 do not currently provide any reimbursement of travel costs.

Of the 11 boroughs which provide financial support and specified mileage reimbursement amounts, the majority pay between 40 pence to 45 pence per mile. Mileage reimbursement amounts range considerably from 37p per mile to 70p per mile, as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Number of boroughs providing financial support for travel by reimbursement per mile

	30p-39p per mile	40p-49p per mile	60p-70p per mile
Financial support - mileage	1	8	2

Sample: 11 boroughs

A number of boroughs raised the lack of information sharing across the boroughs in relation to reimbursement costs and practice. They suggested London Councils should share data on costs and emerging good practice on a regular basis.

London Councils focused its attentions on the use of direct payments and how they had generated considerable savings in Newham, the detail of which is set out below. However, different boroughs take different approaches to offering travel reimbursement, depending on a range of factors including how much time the borough wants to spend on administering the system and how much choice they want to allow parents.

Key learning points

- Providing reimbursements, such as direct payments, provides parents with more choice and local authorities with a cost-effective way of meeting their statutory duties around transport.
- Direct payments can be used as a short-term option, for example until a bus place becomes available, or longer term.
- It is important to communicate the benefits of reimbursements to parents to ensure they understand how to use them to access transport and how to manage the process to ensure they receive full reimbursement.

- Monitoring of the usage of reimbursements is crucial to realise savings. For example, clawing back funding for non-attendance days can save significant amounts of money (see Newham case study below).
- Clear policies need to be in place, specifying what reimbursements will cover, for example whether the borough will pay for a parent's return journey.
- Families who receive either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) with a mobility component or a Motability car, are not currently required to use this for a child or young person's home to education transport. Some boroughs work closely with families to encourage the use of these vehicles, but the lack of statutory powers makes this difficult.

Case study:

Newham – direct payments (DPs)

Newham trialled direct payments (DPs) four years ago, offering direct them via oyster cards for use on public transport or travel in taxis accompanied by parents. DPs can be used in Newham as a short-term option, until a bus place becomes available, or longer term.

Assessment

The council runs fortnightly panels to look at applications for travel assistance from parents and supporting information from schools and support groups. If the panel knows that the young person is likely to become independent or semi-independent (based on whether they meet Newham's criteria) this is a trigger for an internal assessment for DP. If a child does not require a specialist bus place, DP is given as the default option.

The council determines what form of transport a parent should use to transport their child to school using a DP based on published criteria: if the parent has a car, then the council expects them to use that; if the school bus service is full then the council offers parents DPs on buses; and taxis are offered depending on the level of need, for example sensory needs. The council commissions some taxi companies directly, where parents are ineligible for DPs, but most are expected to use DPs. If a child needs to travel in a taxi with a carer the local authority funds the taxi at a higher rate, with the carer meeting the family at home, which reduces costs. Parents can set this up directly and have a choice over which taxi company they use.

For all young people over the age of 16, Newham only offers DPs based on published criteria.

Engagement with parents

Newham made a big effort to communicate the benefits of DPs to parents directly and lots of parents took up the offer. The team meets with parent support groups regularly to explain how direct payments work. This is an important part of the process to help communicate the benefits of DPs and reduce appeals.

Newham has developed good communications networks with parents through parent-support groups. If a parent does not understand DPs, one of the team meets with them to talk them through the approach.

Link to care packages

The council ensured that DPs were linked to care packages, so that families could top up additional hours to enable a key worker to travel with the child. DPs were set up so that if different people are involved in delivering care, they can all access them so there is continuity of care.

Monitoring of use of DPs

Newham pays DPs on a monthly basis, to the exact number of academic days on the last working day of every month. The council asks parents to sign an agreement, which helps to ensure they are aware of the process and minimises any challenge. The monitoring and reimbursement of non-attendance days has led to the council saving money. For example, it saved £34,000 over a two-month period at the start of 2019.

The council compares different taxi companies and Uber to give parents an accurate average figure for their DP to cover taxi costs. Parents submit receipts, resulting in quick payment. Higher costs are usually reimbursed by the council.

Newham is moving to a new system with a pre-paid card on buses or ComCab, and back payments with minicabs. This will remove the receipt process and reduce administrative costs.

Impact of move to DPs

The take up of DPs was quite low when it was first introduced. However, the numbers have increased in recent years. The council now spends around £200,000 on DPs a year, excluding two DP service users with very high needs. Even with an increase in the number of young people eligible for the service, the council is confident that the move to DPs has saved the council money in the long term.

Four years ago, the borough commissioned 62 taxis with parents as escorts. Since moving to DPs, the council now only uses 14 taxis with 68 young people on DPs.

Before moving to DPs, the council would fund the taxi journey for parents coming back from school but no longer provides this based on new published criteria. The council was prepared for a significant amount of appeals but only two parents questioned the decision out of approximately 100 affected, due to close consultation with parents.

Pick up points and bus routes

Benefits of pick up points

In the interviews with different boroughs, conflicting views emerged regarding the advantages of using pick up points on bus routes. The boroughs that use them are clear on the benefits of pick up points:

- They mean less travel time for children and young people, which is better for their general health and wellbeing, as well as generating cost savings for the council in terms of petrol and staff time.
- They help to foster a sense of independence, helping young people towards independent travel in their everyday lives. This leads to more positive outcomes and saves more in the medium to longer term, as young people move away from supported environments.
- Pick up points act as hubs for parents, establishing support networks that they may otherwise not have access to with home pick ups.

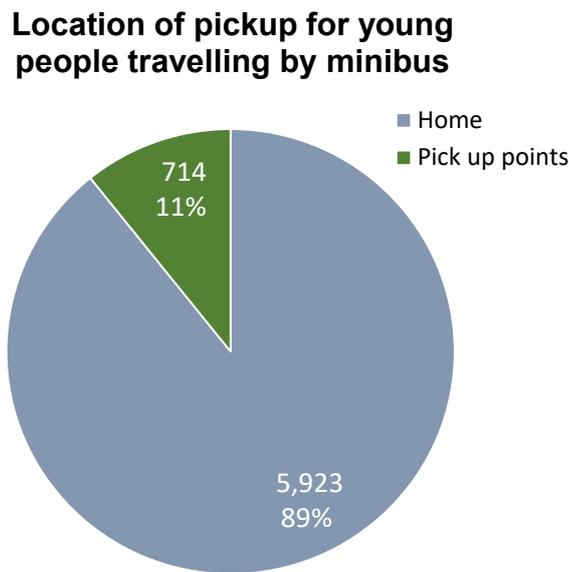
However, other boroughs have considered moving to pick up points but have not viewed the cost savings as significant enough to take this approach. Some boroughs, particularly those in inner London, do not believe there are enough suitable spaces in the borough for pick up points, particularly if using larger vehicles.

The boroughs that have successfully introduced pick up points base their approach on the types of need of the children and young people with SEND who use their services, recognising that pick up points are not appropriate for all service users. They highlighted that the key to successful roll out of pick up points is consultation with parents, young people and schools. It takes time to secure their support to make this type of change – in some cases boroughs have taken at least a year to implement pick up points to secure a good level of engagement. Where a borough has communicated well with parents, they have been largely supportive of the move to pick up points. These parents recognise the benefits for their children in terms of providing them with shorter travel times and fostering their independence in the longer term.

Use of pick up points across London

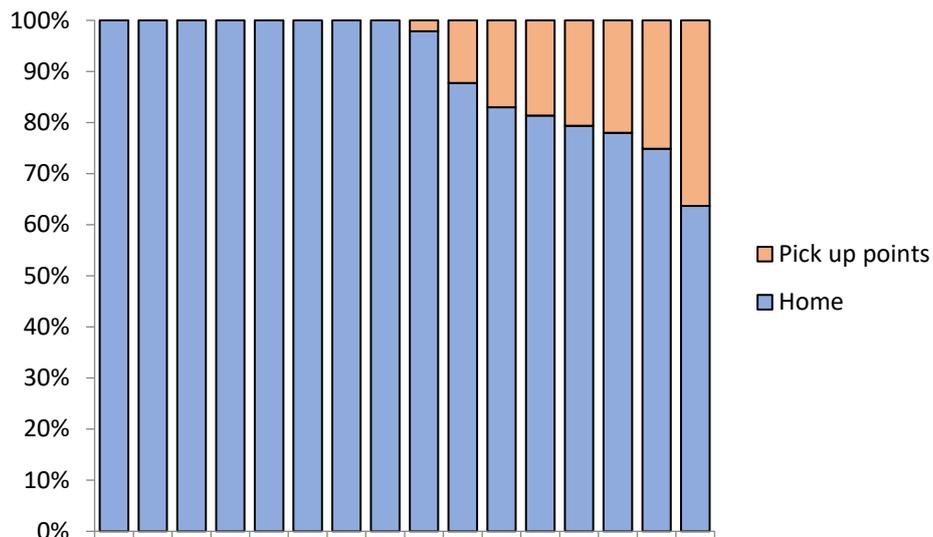
Our benchmarking exercise has identified that, currently, only a small number of children and young people with SEND in London are picked up by bus at pick up points, which is highlighted in figure 4. Nine out of 10 children (89 per cent) are picked up by bus from their home, with a minority (11 per cent) picked up from pickup points. Figure 5 also presents the variation across boroughs in the proportion of young people picked up at home or from a pick up point.

Figure 4 – Location of pickup for young people travelling by minibus



Sample: 16 boroughs

Figure 5 – Location of pickup for young people travelling by minibus by borough



Sample: 16 boroughs

Bus route sharing across boroughs

As part of the discussion on the use of pick up points, the issue of route sharing across borough boundaries also emerged. Route sharing reduces the number of buses required to transport children to some provision, as well as potentially shortening the period spent by children and young people on buses, both of which help to improve outcomes for pupils, generate savings, and reduce air pollution and congestion. There are a few cross-borough shared routes in London but many boroughs do not engage with neighbouring boroughs in this way, mainly due to contractual pressures or lack of capacity. The bi-borough shares routes on a per pupil basis, which allows for boroughs to pay different amounts depending on their priorities but both boroughs benefit from efficiencies.

A number of boroughs suggested that route sharing would be very welcome, particularly on routes to larger special schools that straddle borough boundaries. It may be easier to introduce route sharing in

areas where pick up points are being used, as this may remove any issues around GDPR and information sharing across local authorities.

Key learning points

- Using pick up points rather than home pick ups on bus journeys can reduce journey time, improving the wellbeing of children and young people, as well as generating savings and reducing air pollution and congestion.
- However, pick up points will not work well for every borough. Some do not have the space or do not consider that this approach generates significant enough savings to justify a restructure of bus routes.
- Not all children and young people with SEND can use pick up points. They would need to be assessed to understand what type of pick up would be appropriate.
- Boroughs that have successfully implemented pick up points have spent a great deal of time consulting with parents and working closely with the local parent-carer forum to ensure that changes were fully communicated and understood. It is important to have clear policies in place, for example clear maximum distance a child is expected to walk to a pick up point, to provide reassurance to parents.
- Piloting pick up points on bus routes to particular schools may work well in terms of bringing schools, parents and members on board before taking a wider approach.
- Risk assessment of pick up points is essential to ensure the safety of children and ensure easy access for buses using the sites.
- Parents are usually expected to walk and stay with children at pick up points until buses arrive, unless they give prior consent and the council approves.
- Pick up points may help to facilitate more route sharing across borough boundaries, as buses are generally able to travel longer distances if using pick up points.

Case studies:

Barking and Dagenham

Barking and Dagenham moved all children who use the bus service, apart from wheelchair users and children with complex medical needs, to pick up points in 2015. Most pick up points are within 0.5 miles of home. Using pick up points has halved travel times for many students and reduced staff costs for the council. Parents are largely supportive.

The council offers parents a choice between direct payments or pick up points, which is clearly communicated so that they are fully informed. This choice was supported by the parent-carer forum as they recognised that many children want independence.

Hounslow

Hounslow moved to pick up points over five years ago. It was challenging as it took time for some parents to understand and accept the changes, particularly those who had always received home pick ups. However, pick up points are now a fully embedded part of the Hounslow travel assistance offer.

The Hounslow travel assistance team assesses each application for assistance to determine eligibility and whether the child or young person is suitable for using a pick up point. No child or young person is expected to walk over 0.5 miles to a pick up point. Each pick up point is risk assessed in terms of safety

and parking. The team allows the bus crew to find better locations for pick up points, if they believe the current point is not suitable. But these need to be risk assessed before use.

Children can walk on their own, as long as their parents have given their written consent. If the bus crew notices any issues with the child, they raise concerns directly with the team. Letters are sent to parents of those children or young people who are consistently late.

The team do not have any clear analysis around savings, as a result of introducing pick up points. However, the reduction in journey times (as buses can avoid going in and out of estates) and the greater ability to fill busses to capacity and reduce running times are all cost effective.

Other areas of emerging good practice

Through the discussions on the three key areas of practice discussed above, other areas of good practice and cost savings emerged, covering a wide range of different practice, varying from procurement to taxi-cancellation and sibling policies. It was felt it would be useful to the sector to share some of these insights, which could help to inform practice. These include:

- **Shared framework for private hire vehicles**

Boroughs discussed interest in developing more shared procurement frameworks for private hire vehicles (PHVs) across sub-regions. For example, Camden, Islington and the City of London have recently moved to a shared framework for PHVs that aims to generate savings for all three boroughs, through combined buying power. However, the boroughs are currently facing difficulties around increasing the number of firms that meet quality standards to be included on a framework contract. Joint working is paving the way to exploring sharing routes, where two authorities are running vehicles to the same school, in order to share costs wherever possible. There could be scope for similar frameworks to be rolled out more widely across sub-regions.

- **Procurement best practice**

In discussions with the boroughs, it emerged that it would be useful to share more procurement advice across the sector. Key pointers from the boroughs included the need to build in quality as well as cost into any pricing model, as this ensures better outcomes and a good value for money. Boroughs were also advised against fixed-price models as many providers do not fully understand the implications of this and can overprice based on their assumptions of growth. A price per mile model works better when demand is growing as there is just an incremental charge if the bus has an extra person to pick up. The basic price in this model makes assumptions in order to cover costs, therefore it is not the best option if there is no growth to factor in.

- **Post 16**

SEN transport appears to be an area where boroughs have taken different approaches although most boroughs appear to offer some discretionary service. For example, Barking and Dagenham provides discretionary direct payments for travel assistance to FE students, based on clear published criteria, resulting in very low numbers of students receiving travel assistance from the borough.

- **Providing SEN transport to working families or those with siblings in other schools**

Some boroughs provide transport to children of working families or with siblings in other schools, who need to be transported by their parents, who would otherwise be ineligible for transport. This discretionary support varies significantly across London, depending on local decision making. Boroughs were clear that having a clear policy in place makes it easier to manage parental expectations.

- **Taxi cancellations**

One area where local authorities can save money with minimum disruption to children and young people appears to be in dealing efficiently with taxi cancellations. For example, Barking and Dagenham do not pay for any cancellations of taxi journeys. The council makes sure that an officer is on call from 6.30am every morning to liaise with parents and the taxi companies. This saves the council about £1,000 per week.

- **Linking-up with adult social care**

Not all boroughs take the same approaches to joining-up SEN transport services with adult social care, although some have initiated examples of innovative practice to realise efficiencies and improve outcomes. For example, Camden pays for post-16 SEN transport from adult social care, a decision made when the Children and Families Act was first introduced, as a move to support the transition to adulthood and joined-up working across the council.

- **Route planning**

Most boroughs undertake route planning directly. However, the bi-borough (Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster) contract their bus operators to undertake scheduling and route planning on their behalf. The commissioning team manages their contracts. The council sends a Travel Care Plan, which acts as a one-page profile for every referral to the operators, who then schedule transport for every eligible child or young person. The operators know the roads well and can adjust their routes quickly if there are any issues. The Travel Care and Support Team liaise directly with parents to provide journey updates and notify them in advance of any changes or likely delays.

- **Annual reviews**

A couple of the boroughs interviewed have moved to implementing annual reviews for travel assistance and ask parents to re-apply every year. The approach is driven by a need to stay up to date with the changing needs of the cohort, which helps to ensure that children and young people are accessing appropriate provision to meet their needs. For example, if families move away from a local area or if a child has a significant operation, which changes their transport needs, these changes are not always communicated to the service. It is important that these reviews are linked to annual reviews of EHCPs to keep bureaucracy to a minimum for parents and to ensure services are joined-up.

- **After school provision**

Providing after school provision can enable buses to stagger their pick ups and support working parents. For example, Camden has supported Swiss Cottage Special School to deliver after school provision, by providing transport afterwards. This does not cost the council any more money, provides a more enriching offer to pupils and allows working parents to pick up their children independently.

Recommendations for London local government

As part of the interviews with boroughs we discussed what more could be done collectively to support the sector to make service improvements and reduce costs in SEN transport services. The responses covered a wide range of areas. Additional consultation with a wider group of SEN transport leads has helped to refine the list of recommendations further.

London local government should work collaboratively to:

- 1. Identify, design and deliver more shared bus routes across London boroughs, exploring innovative technological solutions, to reduce travel times for children and young people, generate savings for boroughs and reduce air pollution.**
A few boroughs already share some routes but a wider review of how this could be undertaken across London would be welcome. At present, efforts to work collaboratively are hindered by lack of capacity and access to technology that could help to map shared routes.
- 2. Discuss with TfL the need to provide more SEN training for bus drivers and raise awareness of children and young people with SEND on public transport.**
TfL has made considerable efforts to make their network accessible to people with SEND, for example by running bus days as part of independent travel training. However, boroughs have reported ongoing issues with some bus drivers and members of the public who do not understand the behaviours of some children and young people with SEND.
- 3. Lobby government to make it a statutory requirement for families in receipt of either DLA or PIP, with a mobility component or with a Motability car, to use this for the child or young person's home to education transport.**
At present, it is not mandatory for families in receipt of either DLA or PIP with a mobility component or Motability car, to transport their children to school. This means that councils may have to provide additional transport support to these families, putting more pressure on overstretched budgets.
- 4. Work together to establish more capacity for Independent Travel Training (ITT) across London to meet growing need.**
There is a clear shortage of high-quality ITT providers across London, with a significant number of young people waiting for ITT. There are many ways London Councils could help to grow this provision, including working with external providers to expand the market, supporting boroughs to develop in-house programmes or joining-up boroughs with other existing borough-led ITT programmes.
- 5. Explore options to develop shared frameworks for private hire vehicles across sub-regions of London boroughs.**
There are a few existing shared frameworks in London that work to keep prices low and generate savings. There could be scope to roll these arrangements out more widely to spread the benefits to other boroughs.

In addition to these recommendations, it was also suggested that London Councils helps to set up a network of SEN transport leads from across London to facilitate data and information sharing. As part of the research project, London Councils has now established a SEN transport network.

London Councils will consider how to take these recommendations forward, but the success of this work will rely on collaborative efforts across boroughs to implement change.

CROYDON INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk



CITT

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

Personalised one-to-one program helping young people with SEND learn to travel from home to school/college safely on their own.

SKILLS DEVELOPED INCLUDE:



Road safety



**Travelling by
bus or train**



**Personal
safety**



Problem solving
e.g., bus is late



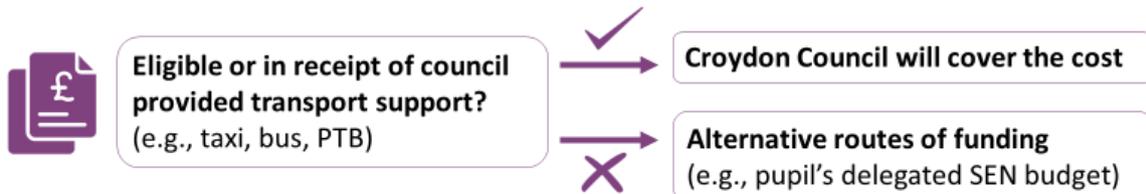
Time keeping

IS IT RIGHT FOR OUR YOUNG PERSON?

- ✓ The young person must have the potential, once trained, to travel to and from school completely independently.

We will complete a full assessment to make sure training is only offered if it is right for everyone

How is it funded?

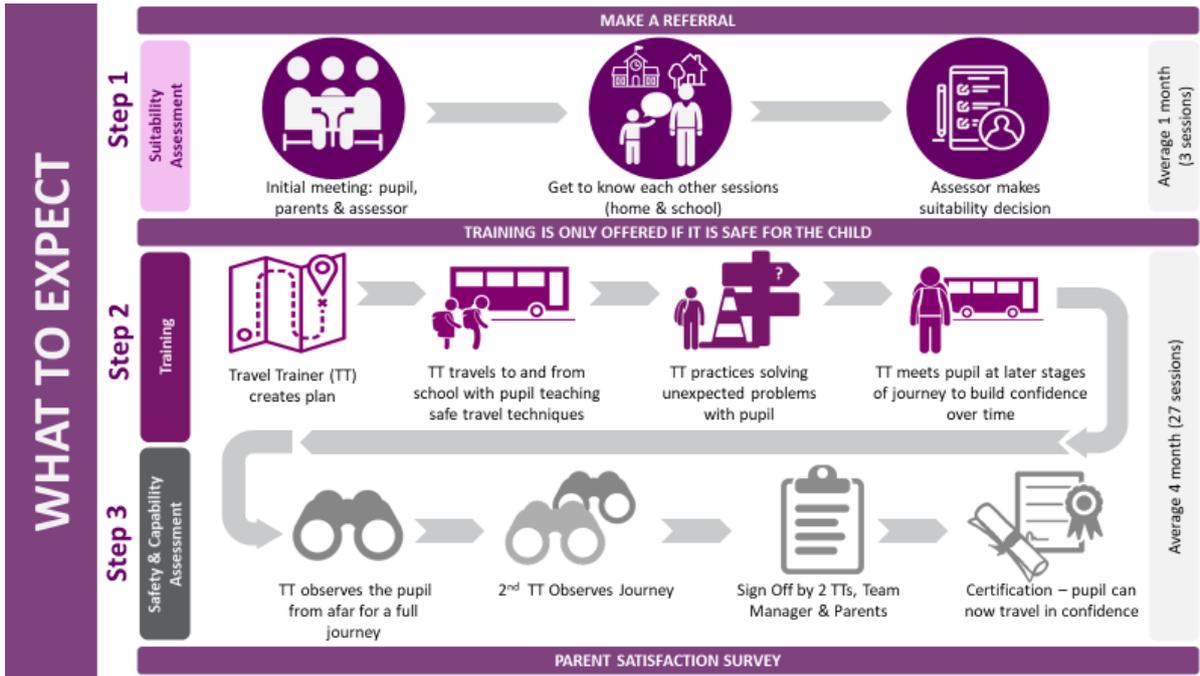


Independent travel training is typically worth £1,100, depending on pupils' need. Funded training will not impact your benefits entitlement.

BENEFITS OF INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING

'The trainer has been really patient, empowered my son through his words of encouragement and continues to encourage him ... he gives him that space to grow, which is really important for my son'





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Still unsure? Talk to us: email traveltraining@croydon.gov.uk or call 020 86047578

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Home to School Travel Assistance: A Guide

December 2014

Introduction

This guide is designed to provide brief information and advice to parents and carers, regarding the services that may be available to assistance children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities travelling to and from school.

[What is home to school travel assistance?](#)

Home-to-school travel assistance is assistance that may be provided by the Local Authority in certain instances to ensure that a child can access their place of education in a stress-free way. There are many forms of assistance that may be offered to families, and a number of factors are considered when deciding whether assistance is to be provided and, if so, what form of assistance it will be.

[Who is eligible for travel assistance?](#)

If a child/young person has an EHC Plan (or a Statement of Special Educational Need) they may be eligible for home-to-school travel assistance. The majority of pupils and students with EHC Plans as a result of their SEND do not need and do not receive travel assistance. However, there may be some pupils and students with severe learning difficulties, physical and medical needs who may need travel Assistance to assist parents in getting them to school.

If you think that your child may be eligible, please refer to the 'How to apply for travel assistance' section of this document for further information.

More detail on the eligibility criteria used when assessing applications for home-to-school travel assistance can be accessed in the LBBD *"Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Home to School Travel Assistance Policy"*.

[General Eligibility Rules](#)

- If a parent/carer chooses to send their child to a school other than the nearest suitable school, they are then responsible for all travel assistance to that chosen placement;
- The offer of a school place does not in any way guarantee travel assistance;
- The parent/carer maintains responsibility for ensuring their child attends school;
- Travel assistance may be withdrawn if the child's behaviour is deemed to be a health and safety risk to the provider or others travelling on the same route;
- Travel assistance may be withdrawn if the parent does not use the allocated service for longer than 2 weeks without prior notice to the transport commissioning team;
- Travels assistance may be withdrawn if the parent fails to be at the collection point and the child is taken to a place of safety.

What journeys are eligible for travel assistance?

Travel assistance is awarded for journeys to and from the educational setting at the beginning and end of the day. After school activities and educational trips should be met by the educational placement or the parent/carer. In addition, travel assistance is not usually provided for the following:

- Hospital, medical, or dental appointments;
- Children taken ill during the school day;
- Schools where parent/carers are making their own arrangements;
- Schools which are not the nearest school able to meet the needs of the pupil.

What about parents/carers with a disability?

Where a parent's/carer's disability prevents them from providing travel assistance for their child the local authority will consider free travel assistance for the child. This will still be subject to an assessment of need.

What if my child doesn't have an EHC Plan/Statement of SEN?

Travel assistance will be considered for children and young people where there is written evidence from a medical professional to assistance the request for travel assistance.

How can I apply for travel assistance?

All requests for travel assistance will be considered by the Transport Commissioner. There is an on-line application form that must be completed. It is vital that this form is filled out fully, as it is this information that will be used to assess eligibility, and any missing information may hinder your application.

To access the online application for travel assistance please click here: [Special educational needs travel assistance - London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Council](#)

Requests can take up to two weeks to be considered. You will be notified of the decision in writing within this two-week timescale.

What are the options for travel assistance?

If your application for travel assistance is accepted, you may be offered one of the following options:

- **Mileage:** this allows you to claim for transporting your child to and from school daily;
- **A Direct Payment:** This is to allow you to commission your own travel assistance for your child to attend school;
- **Independent Travel Training:** This service is to deliver a programme of independent travel training to enable your child to travel independently to and from school
- **Bus Service (Pick-up Point):** Your child will be transported to and from school by bus. The parent carer will be responsible for taking the child to an allocated designated point for collection and drop off
- **Bus Service (Home Collection):** In exceptional circumstances a bus may collect your child/young person from the home.
- **Taxi Service:** In a small number of cases the use of a taxi may be considered.

Note: Escorts/Passenger Assistants

In some cases, a Passenger assistant will not be provided by the Authority and the parent/care would be expected to travel with their child to school.

Where a Passenger Assistant is provided as part of the travel assistance, every effort will be made to ensure the same Passenger Assistant is provided throughout the period of awarded travel. However, on some occasions there may be a need for the provider to change the Passenger Assistant. This may happen without prior notice, but every effort is made to keep this to a minimum.

Note: Mileage Claims

If you have been awarded mileage as travel assistance for your child, you will receive a claim form which will detail the mileage that you can claim to take your child to and from school. This form will need to be submitted on a monthly basis to the transport commissioning team who will then check your child's attendance before submitting any claims for processing.

Note: Direct Payments

If you have been awarded a direct payment as travel assistance for your child, the Local Authority Direct Payments Officer will contact you to arrange a meeting to set up the direct payments.

Note: Travel Training

If you have been awarded travel training as travel assistance for your child, you will be contracted by one of the approved providers commissioned by the authority. There will be an initial assessment made and a training package built for your child.

In some cases, the initial assessment has identified that the young person is not suitable for travel training. If this is the case, an alternative travel solution will be offered to you.

Note: Commissioned Taxi

If you have been awarded a commissioned taxi for your child, the taxi will collect your child from home and bring them back home at the end of the school day. All taxi providers have been

approved by the authority, and where a passenger assistant has been agreed, the passenger assistant will have an up-to-date Enhanced DBS check.

Where possible, we request the crews to remain the same and all staff working on our contracted journeys must wear ID badges containing a recent photograph and their DBS details.

Note: Bus Service:

If you have been awarded a seat on the bus service, you will have to take your child to one of the allocated pick up points to meet the bus. The pick up point you are allocated will be the closest point to your home address. You will be given a timeframe when the bus will be at this pick up point. If you miss the bus you will have to take your child to school.

In exceptional circumstance, you may be allocated a home pick up for your child. The bus will therefore park as close to your house as possible.

ID Badges

If your child has been allocated a place on the bus from a pick up point, you will receive an ID badge with your child's name and an ID number on it. It is essential that you carry this when taking and collecting your child from the bus.

The bus crews are instructed not to release any child if the parent does not have the ID badge. We can issue a second ID badge free of charge.

Essential Information Forms

Prior to travel assistance commencing, an Essential Information Form (EIF) must be completed by the parent or carer. This form enables you to provide essential information regarding your child's school placement, contact details in an emergency, medical needs, travel needs and communication needs. This information is shared with the transport provider and the place of safety to ensure that staff working with your child has sufficient information to assist in their safe transportation and care.

Places of Safety

On occasions, parents may be unable to collect their child from transport or not be at home when the vehicle drops their child home at the end of the school day. The child will be taken to one of the following places of safety:

- The Heathway Centre – 512a Heathway, Dagenham
- Marks Gate Children's Centre - Rose Lane, Marks Gate

If your child is taken to a place of safety, you will need to take your ID badge if you have one and photographic proof of your identity. (Passport or Driving Licence)

The place of safety centres have been set up to safeguard your child in an emergency. The use of the place of safety is monitored and continuous use of this service may result in the suspension of travel assistance for the child.

What happens next?

Once travel assistance has been agreed for you child, you will receive notification from the Transport Commissioner. You will be told the type of provision that has been awarded and the details of the travel assistance.

You will be advised when the travel assistance is to start. If you are allocated a seat on the bus or a commissioned taxi, it will be your responsibility to take your child to the vehicle and collect your child from the vehicle. Children will not be permitted to leave a vehicle unless an authorised adult is at the vehicle to collect the child. Passenger assistants are not permitted to take children out of the vehicle and walk them to the front door.

What if I am not happy with the decision of the Transport Commissioner?

If you are unhappy with the decision regarding an application for transport assistance you may appeal against this decision. In the first instance (stage one), your appeal will be considered by a senior officer within the local authority, who will communicate their decision to uphold or overturn your appeal in writing. If you remain unhappy following decision of stage one, you may progress to stage two appeal whereby a panel of local authority officers will consider your appeal.

In both scenarios above, the officers concerned will be independent of the previous decision-making process.

If you wish to appeal a decision, please send to transport.appeals@lbbd.gov.uk

What if I have a problem with the transport assistance I am receiving?

If you are unhappy with the transport assistance you are receiving you should contact the Transport Commissioner at the following e-mail address transport.request@lbbd.gov.uk . In most cases, issues can be resolved relatively easily using this approach.

In some cases, however, you may wish to escalate the matter to a formal complaint by contacting our Complaints Team on 020 8227 2405 / 2111 or SocialCareComplaintsandInformation@lbbd.gov.uk and they will initiate a formal complaint investigation for you. You may also write to the Complaints Team at Room 115, Barking Town Hall, 1 Town Square, Barking, Essex. IG11 7LU.

Further Information

For further information please refer to the LBBB *“Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Home to School Travel Assistance Policy”*.

Useful Contact Numbers:

EHC Team: 020 227 2440

Transport Commissioning Team: 020 8227 3623/2486

The Heathway Centre: 020 8227 5550

Marks Gate Children’s Centre: 020 8270 6091

Parents in Partnership: 020 8593 4422

