



# SEND Consultation Findings Report – SEND Travel Assistance Policy

## December 2018

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to feed back the key findings of this consultation to the SEND Consultation project board, Head of Education and Inclusion and Education Senior Management Team and to inform the Head of Education and Inclusion's paper to Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

### *Transport Assistance Policy*

- This was the largest group of respondents (48.28%) who expressed a view supported introduction of a annual review whilst 37.93% did not support this proposal. The majority of respondents (58.62%) indicated they would not wish to take up the opportunity of a personal budget.
- The majority of respondents did not agree with the proposal to transport would not be provided if the local authority if the parental preference was not the nearest appropriate placement
- There was a clear differentiation between comments made in the surveys and the conclusions made by attendees at the events.
- There was overwhelming feedback that the current system works and in some cases the introduction of a new policy was seen as a cost cutting exercise.
- There has been little support for the recommendation to introduce a travel assistance budget however from young people there is support as they see this as a benefit towards making their life more independent.
- The annual review of transport is perceived as being of great anxiety in that transport may be removed, however, the principle when explained was accepted.

## Main Report - Introduction

### 1. Proposed Approach

Approval to consult on the proposal to introduce a new SEND Travel Assistance Policy with key stakeholders, partners and children, young people and their families was granted by the Darlington Borough Council Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018. The consultation ran from 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### 2. Consulting on the Proposed Approach

The public consultation questions focused on the introduction of a new SEND Travel Assistance Policy and the introduction of:

- An annual review of transport arrangements
- An introduction and offer of personal travel assistance budgets/cash allowance
- An offer of independent travel training

The Policy also outlined where transport would not be provided and asked for comments on the eligibility proposals.

### 3. Methodology

The general public and interested parties were invited to participate in the consultation. To reach as many people as possible, a range of consultation methods were available. The consultation documents including the survey can be found at **Annex A**.

#### 3.1 Consultation Documents

There was a series of public consultations through both events and a survey which was available on line [www.darlington.gov.uk/SEND](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/SEND). The survey was also available in hard copy at all events.

The SEND Travel Assistance Policy was provided alongside the presentation on the proposed SEND Travel Assistance Policy which outlined the reasons for the proposed change, benefits and strengths of the proposals, and questions for consultation.

#### 3.2 Stakeholder Consultation Events

There was a whole variety of professional fora pre-consultation to brief colleagues and stakeholders on the consultation including the Parent Carer Forum, and Darlington Association on Disability (DAD).

During consultation we were able to inform stakeholders of the consultation themes at meetings that had already been organised by the Local Authority (LA) and stakeholders, for example, events for parents and carers, hosted by the Parent Carer Forum; the SEND Steering group; School Forum; SENCo network training; Primary Schools Forum; 11-19 Forum (secondary schools and post 16 providers); Joint meetings with health and other partner meetings.

A list of who we consulted with and in what way can be seen in Section 5.

### 3.3 Publicity

In order to reach as many people as possible, the consultation was advertised through the following channels.

We directly emailed all parents/carers of children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and emailed key stakeholders in addition to early years providers, schools, colleges and health and social care professionals. This included members of Darlington's Children Young People Plan steering group, SEND Steering Group, and Healthy Lifestyle steering group.

All stakeholders were encouraged to respond in ways appropriate, including writing formal responses to a dedicated email address.

A poster was circulated within key locations in Darlington town centre including the Library, One Stop Shop and sent to other locations attended by the public eg children centres, Head of Steam etc. The LA Communications team organised social media and press releases, such as through Darlington and Stockton Times as well as regular reminders on the DBC website. The Local Offer pages were updated to include information to post readers to the SEND consultation page.

All DBC staff were alerted through publicity on "The Bulletin" and posters.

Consultation with Children and Young People was organised through the LA participation officers and this included representatives from 'Voices'; 'Next Steps'; 'Young Leaders'; Primary and Secondary school Councils. 50 Children and Young People attended these meetings.

The Parent Carer Forum, the Children and Young People Scrutiny and SENDIASS Officer were all instrumental in sharing the information with their forums/contacts.

School Governors were all alerted to the consultation along with other education professionals such as resource base heads of teams, outreach service heads and SENCOs.

Requests via social care team leaders were made to share wider and support when engagement with parents and young people.

Health professionals eg service leads (Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Audiology, Ophthalmology; etc) were contacted directly, as well as Clinical Commissioning Group and the North of England commissioning support unit.

### 3.4 Quantitative Data

As well as the respondents who completed survey online all hard copy/paper versions of the questionnaires completed by individuals were entered into the survey results.

It was evident of the answers directly entered by respondents on the online survey that the majority of responses were individual responses. The hard copy/paper versions of the survey were mostly on behalf of organisations.

The data was extracted onto an excel spreadsheet and the closed questions were analysed to establish what proportion of respondents agreed or disagreed. Group public data and feedback was not entered onto the on line surveys, but was recorded separately, and the

number of participants at public events was recorded in accordance with attendance lists and headcounts as not all participants recorded attendance due to personal choice.

### 3.5 Qualitative Data

For the feedback, the survey open questions with qualitative responses were analysed manually to establish particular themes and enable key findings to emerge. Feedback from group meetings was noted long-hand, typed up and analysed for key themes. These key themes were separate to the survey responses. Due to the nature of the format for events and discussions raised, not all the questions were necessarily covered but these have been added to the appropriate part of the Key Findings section 4.

In addition to the 29 respondents to the survey, 99 overall took part in public meetings which presented the opportunity to ask questions and express views and there were 11 written responses (please see section 5).

## 4. Key Findings

The Key Findings from the consultation was presented as a table of quantitative data about the closed questions from the survey, and then key themes from both the qualitative feedback from the open survey questions and events, about why respondents agreed or disagreed and any particular impact raised has been noted.

### 4.1 SEND Travel Assistance Policy

This survey asked nine questions in relation to implementation of a SEND Travel Assistance Policy. In all areas of this part of the consultation a theme was in relation to the administration of the policy recommendations and the need for the LA to consider capacity required and to think the process through.

Questions 24-28 asked about the respondent, these are summarised in **Annex B**. Of the 29 respondents through the survey 27 identified the capacity in which they were responding to the survey:

A parent / carer	55.56%	15
A young person	0.00%	0
An educational professional	37.04%	10
A health professional	0.00%	0
A social care professional	0.00%	0
A governor	0.00%	0
A charity	0.00%	0
A voluntary organisation	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	7.41%	2
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>2</b>

The comments of children and young people on their experiences are also sighted in this section.

**Question 1 and 2 – To what extent do you agree that there should be an annual review of transport arrangements?**

Answer Choices	Responses			
Strongly agree	20.69%	6	Total agree	48.28%
Agree	27.59%	8		
Neither agree nor disagree	13.79%	4	Neither agree nor disagree	13.79%
Disagree	6.90%	2		
Strongly disagree	31.03%	9	Total disagree	37.93%
<b>Answered</b>		<b>29</b>		
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>0</b>		

There was some support for an annual review but the majority did not agree.

- Many commented that CYP with more complex needs may not change much within this timescale and that this should be noted in application of the policy.
- There was concern that an annual review would increase levels of stress to families and young people, if each year support would be removed.
- Comments made were in support of the principle of an annual review particularly in respect to preparation for adulthood as this would enable us to identify long term needs at an earlier stage.
- The timing of the transport annual review should take place at the EHC Plan review however concern was expressed that the LA should prioritise at key transition points and ensure SEND officers are in attendance.

*“as long as the annual review is not used to cut transport costs and is used to make sure transport is thoughtfully worked out to suit the needs of the children and their families”*

### Questions 3 and 4 – to what extent would you agree to a personal travel assistance budget?

Answer Choices	Responses			
Strongly agree	10.34%	3	Total agree	27.58%
Agree	17.24%	5	Neither agree nor disagree	13.79%
Neither agree nor disagree	13.79%	4	Total disagree	58.62%
Disagree	20.69%	6		
Strongly disagree	37.93%	11		
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>29</b>		
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>		

There was strong disagreement which was evidenced through the survey and at meetings for this proposal:

- In the survey there was overwhelming disagreement with this proposal some highlighting safeguarding risks in handing over responsibility of vulnerable young people to travel companies.
- On discussion at meetings there was some acceptance from families particularly for older more mobile children/young people this may work
- In reviewing children and young people's comments, there are some examples cited where a personal assistance budget may work in terms of access to employment/leisure activities

*“if transport is no longer co-ordinated and there is a free for all we would be very worried about the impact on the safety of site users as inevitably it would increase the numbers of vehicles coming on site – has there been any assessment of impact of this?”*

*“it may also be challenging for some families to cope with such a system from a financial management and administrative perspective”*

*“this is a short sighted proposal”*

*“it would be spent on other things and the child would be left unable to get to school”*

**Questions 5 and 6 – should the placement not be the nearest appropriate, to what extent do you agree that transport should not be provided?**

Answer Choices	Responses			
Strongly agree	21.43%	6	Total agree	28.57%
Agree	7.14%	2	Neither agree nor disagree	7.14%
Neither agree nor disagree	7.14%	2		
Disagree	17.86%	5	Total disagree	64.29%
Strongly disagree	46.43%	13		
<b>Answered</b>		<b>28</b>		
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>1</b>		

There was strong disagreement for this proposal through the survey. The key messages included:

this would take away parental choice.

- On discussion at meetings there was acceptance from families that in an ideal world, all families would want their child to be educated closer to home but because of the lack of choice families do not want this to be restricted and feel it would be unfair to pay, as many cannot pay and the repercussions' could be wide reaching eg social mobility.
- At meetings members of the public identified the need to ensure link to the Strategy.

*“there is a risk that the policy will result in high numbers of appeals and cost incurred offset value for money”*



**Questions 7 and 8 – to what extent would you agree to independent travel training?**

Answer Choices	Responses			
Strongly agree	35.71%	10	Total agree	53.57%
Agree	17.86%	5		
Neither agree nor disagree	10.71%	3	Neither agree nor disagree	10.71%
Disagree	7.14%	2		
Strongly disagree	28.57%	8	Total disagree	35.71%
<b>Answered</b>		<b>28</b>		
<b>Skipped</b>		<b>1</b>		

The proposal was relatively balanced for and against.

- In the survey's respondents felt that this element of the policy would expose vulnerable CYP to unacceptable behaviour and some raised safeguarding considerations.
- There was consistent concern regarding capacity of the transport infrastructure in Darlington to cope alongside safety and safeguarding.
- Some felt this would be acceptable for Year 11's if they could cope.
- There was some agreement that as a concept this would prepare children for adulthood where it was appropriate. Travel training should be extended to the school workforce.

*"in respect to our child, this would be of not benefit however where the individual is able and could benefit from this it is a good idea"*

*"independent travel might not be realistic for all children and there are some concerns that this ultimately shifts responsibility for travel safety of vulnerable young people to travel companies"*

*"there are benefits to having travel trainers"*

**Voice of the Children and Young People**

- 6 pupils who represented a School Council were all happy with the mode of transport to get to school (including taxi, and school bus) but not happy with the time it takes due to distances and pick up. Due to this they have little opportunity to take part in activities after school, make and sustain friendships. One secondary school age pupil said it was easy to be picked up from home to as the placement for this pupil was out of borough.
- 7 young people aged 17 to 25 expressed their issues with a shared mini-bus, they preferred the choice of a taxi rather than the arranged transport. The issues included the co-ordination and communication around transport between DBC, Darlington College, the Family and young person these relate to timetabling which can prevent them from doing after College 'on site' activities which they would like to do. They feel this restricts them from socialising due to transport arrangements and sometimes it has been known that the buses leave without them. *"They do not wait very long for people just in case they have just been held up"*. They felt that walking would be OK to school and/or College but that their parents would not be happy is it may be too far

and that they would not know the way however the young people felt comfortable to do this.

- Pupils at a special school expressed concern about behaviour on their bus, but despite this they were happy with the current way of getting to school.
- Some would like to bike to school but they have been given no option but the school bus, they would like to explore other options and they are very happy to go on their own. Some feel that they cannot walk or go on a bike because of the distance and lack of placements closer to home.
- Some CYP were making plans for independent travel and also stated that DAD does provide travel training.
- Many like the idea of getting a bus pass and using public transport if they had independence training.
- Due to transport restrictions there are very few after school clubs in specialist settings which restricts socialising with peers.
- Some children who are travelling from other boroughs are taxied into school, they are happy with the arrangement but not the time it takes due to distance and due to dropping off/picking up other children. Due to the distance that they travelled they could not take part in after school activities and had few local friends.

## 5. Consultees

### Summary

Responses from the 11 consultees (as presented below) are presented in **Annex C** of this document.

<b>Response Type</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Total survey responses (including hard copy survey's received)	29
Public Events (including open health, social care and school meetings) number of attendees	99
Children and Young People Events – number of attendees	50
Total number of detailed written responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers of Deaf and Visually Impaired, Darlington Low Incidence Needs Service</li> <li>- National Deaf Children Society</li> <li>- Federation of Mowden Schools</li> <li>- Traveller Education and Attainment Service, Darlington</li> <li>- Parent/Carer</li> <li>- The Federation of Darlington Nursery Schools</li> <li>- Darlington CYP Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Carmel Education Trust</li> <li>- Darlington Association on Disability</li> <li>- Parent Carer Forum</li> </ul>	11

### Stakeholder Consultation

<b>Consultation theme</b>	<b>Consultation type</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
SEND Strategy and Funding	Public event	Monday 5 November	8
SEND Travel Assistance Policy	Public event	Monday 5 November	11
SEND Strategy and Funding	Public event	Monday 5 November	6
SEND Strategy and Funding	Public event	Tuesday 6 November	6
SEND Travel Assistance Policy	Public event	Tuesday 6 November	2
All consultations	Open Health meeting	Wednesday 14 November	2
All consultations	Open Social Care meeting	Wednesday 14 November	10
All consultations	Public event	Tuesday 20 November	5
SEND Strategy and Funding	Public event	Wednesday 21 November	16
SEND Travel Assistance Policy	Public event	Wednesday 21 November	5
All consultations	Open Schools meeting	Thursday 22 November	28

## Children and Young People Consultation

Consultation Theme	Consultation details	Date	Numbers
All consultations	<p><b>Voices</b> C:TheBox A social group for young people aged between 15 and 25 who are on the Asperger's &amp; Autistic spectrum</p>	Thursday 15 November	3 CYP
All consultations	<p><b>Next Steps</b> Darlington College A group of 16 plus young people who attend Darlington college to social and learn life skill all of whom are on the ASD spectrum</p>	Thurs 15 November	3 CYP
All consultations	<p><b>Darlington Association on Disability</b> provide a number of young people focused groups.</p> <p><b>Young Leaders</b> is a group for young people with disabilities aged between 14 and 25.</p> <p><b>M.F.I</b> (Mentoring For Independence) works with older young people and aims to improve independence.</p> <p><b>DASH Play Scheme</b> offers 3 playgroups for children aged 3 to 15.</p>	<p>Wednesday 7 November</p> <p>Thursday 15 November</p> <p>Wednesday 31 October &amp; Thursday 1 November</p>	<p>7 CYP</p> <p>14 CYP</p> <p>12 CYP</p>
All consultations	<p><b>Primary School Council</b> March Bank School Meeting with the school council and talking to children aged between 5 and 11</p>	Wednesday 7 November	6 CYP
All consultations	<p><b>Primary &amp; Secondary School Council</b> Beaumont Hill Academy A specialist provider for children aged 2 -19 with special educational needs. Meeting with both the primary and secondary aged School Council</p>	Wednesday 14 November	5 CYP