



Kids First SEND Group

26 January 2022

Home to school travel consultation

Summary of responses

The home to school travel consultation ended on 5 January 2022

- 155 responses to the on-line survey and 6 direct emails (84 % were parents).
- Focus groups with children at Cricket Green School and the Raynes Park High School ASD provision
- Two sessions with Kids' First parents
- Session with commissioning staff



Two main aspects to the consultation:

Towards more inclusive forms of travel?

What do people know of and think about more inclusive forms of home to school travel- Independent Travel training and Personal Travel budgets?

Does Merton's current model represent a 'dependency model'?

Discretionary travel provision (pre-school & post-16)

Should Merton continue to provide, cease to provide, charge for provision of restrict provision to only those with the most significant special educational needs in:

- Pre-school SEND
- Post 16 with SEND and 'vulnerable learners'



Independent Travel training

Half of the respondents were aware that Merton offered independent travel training; half were not.

The top perceived benefits of independent travel training were:

- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence 70%
- Reduced reliance on family/friends to assist with travel needs 48%

The top barriers to take up of independent travel training were:

- Limited awareness of danger or unable to keep safe 57%
- Wouldn't be able to manage situations that aren't planned or are out of routine 56%



66% agreed/strongly agreed that young people should be encouraged to undertake the training if they had the potential.

Many positive comments about the benefits but others that it is not right for all young people; that it should be properly assessed; that the distance of some school placements make travelling by public transport all but impossible.

The focus groups also showed the positive benefits to the child/young person of independent travel stemming from travel training and possibility of a more co-ordinated approach to identifying suitable children with more travel.

Cost of travel training is largely one-off £2,500 per student Vs £9,000 per year average for organised transport.



Personal Travel budgets

The numbers with PTABs has declined over the past two years from well over 70 to now just over 50. Fewer than half of respondents were aware of its existence

Constraints:

- Value is seen as too low
- Scheme was too complicated and over-policed by the LA.

Discretionary transport

16-18 – support for students of sixth form age with SEND

Option 1- continue to provide support as it is now - 96% agreed

Option 2- cease to provide unless exceptional circumstances - 84% disagreed

Option 3- seek a financial contribution - 59% disagreed

Option 4 – only provide for the most severe/complex SEND - 56% disagreed

Pre-school SEND support

Cease to provide pre-school SEND travel support - 78% disagreed

Seek a financial contribution - 52% disagreed



Next steps

Report to Scrutiny Committee on 9 February and then to Cabinet for decision on any policy changes on 21 March

5 Proposals to discuss

For more independent forms of travel:

1. Increasing the promotion and ease of use of travel budgets (PTABs) as an option that can be more flexible for parents and be a lower cost to the council;
2. Increase investment in travel training, both for the improved well-being of the young person to support independence and, in cases where it is appropriate, to save the council the long term cost of supported travel.

For Discretionary support (Early Years and post-16):

3. Continuing to support families with children of pre-school age with the most significant needs where it is essential to get their child to school, especially for those with severe and profound learning difficulties
4. Travel support for post-16 students to in the future be predominantly through independent forms of travel assistance where possible, with support to provision where a course is not available in close vicinity. Continuing to support families with children and young people with severe and profound learning difficulties
5. Not to implement charging post-16 students for a seat on a bus or in a taxi on the basis that young people without disabilities can access courses without charge through the TfL free bus network, and so to charge would be unequal