



Briefing 17/23 June 2017

Home to School transport for SEND children: Reducing costs and enhancing outcomes

Part 1 of 2: Demand Management (for Part 2, see Briefing 17/24)

To: All contacts

Key points

- Typical costs of home to school transport sit at around £12 per day plus administration costs dependent on transport method employed
- Costs of Home to School transport for SEND children may be significantly reduced through enabling independent travel
- Independent travel, not only reduces costs by up to 95%, it also provides students with a set of life skills and personal independence.

Introduction

Under the Education Act 1996, local authorities, with responsibility for Education (LEAs) are under a duty to ensure suitable travel arrangements are made for eligible children to attend school. One group of children who fall in to the eligibility criteria are those who cannot be reasonably expected to walk to school given mobility problems or because of Health and Safety issues related to their special educational needs or disability (SEND).

Under the Home to school travel and transport statutory guidance for local authorities, the transport requirements for each SEND child should be assessed individually and the approach taken must be taken within the context of promoting sustainable modes of transport, where sustainability is defined as modes of transport that the local authority considers may improve the children's physical well-being, or the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority's area or both.

Demand - can we reduce demand for the service?

On the face of it, demand may seem a fruitless avenue of exploration, since the level of need is outside of a local authority's control. However, it is possible to reduce demand for the costlier forms of home to school transport, sustainably, through enabling independent travel on public modes of transport. Indeed, the Home to school travel and transport guidance states that opportunities for independent travel for SEND children must be considered as part of an authority's overall audit of infrastructure to support sustainable school travel.

Since 2010, City of York council's York Independent Living & Travel Skills service (YILTs) has reduced annual transports costs for a cohort of 20-30 SEND children each year by approximately 95%. In 2015/16, the service supported a group of 25 children to travel independently, using local buses at a cost of £3,100, a small proportion of the anticipated cost of £57,000 were they to have travelled by taxi.

As shown in the table below, based upon an alternative scenario of travelling by taxi at a cost of £12 per day, the service delivered a saving in travel costs of £56,080 in 2013/14 and if these children have continued to travel independently, the council has made a further saving of £112,160 in the two subsequent years. Similarly, in 2014/5, the service delivered a saving in travel costs of £56,619 and will have similarly done so in 2015/16. Combining these savings with the savings shown below in 2015/16, the service has reduced travel costs by £335,378 over three years and staffing costs have totaled approximately £133,170 over this time period, delivering a net saving of £202, 208, a total which will continue to grow.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No. of children supported to travel independently	26	26	25
Staffing and Administrative (approximate)	£44,390	£44,390	£44,390
Children's travel costs	£3, 200	£2,661	£3,100
Annual cost of taxi service for all children supported by YILTS (190 days, £12 per day)	£59,280	£59,280	£57,000
Savings in travel costs	£56, 080	£56, 619	£53, 900

To achieve, this all SEND students, undergo an initial travel training assessment (ITTA) in year 6, before they transition to secondary school. This enables the council to categorise their travel needs as follows:

- Green – no transport support needed at this stage.
- Amber – may need short term council-funded transport and will have immediate YILTS support. These students will work with YILTS at Year 6-7

and will aim to start secondary school as independent travelers. If this is not possible, they will be reassessed and more support given on a yearly basis.

- Red – will need long term transport support. This group will be assessed annually and families will be encouraged to make any small steps towards independence that may be possible

To proceed with the YILTs service, it must be shown that the student has a risk index of 12 or below using the 5 x 5 Health & Safety Executive risk management system (Hazard versus Probability). The YILTs worker will then work with the children and their parents/guardians to draw up an Independent Travel Plan (ITP), including targets relating to the following areas:

- Pedestrian/traffic skills
- Bus skills
- Sense of place
- Life skills- e.g. using money, mobile phones

Parents are asked to sign a consent form at the outset that details the service's promises to them and also confirms their agreement that they will relinquish council-funded transport once their son or daughter can travel independently. The team works closely with Social Workers, Connexions Advisors, Educational Psychologists, and Specialist Teachers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) in schools and staff at local FE colleges to ensure the child is well supported through the service.

Alongside off-setting more costlier forms of transport, YILTs delivers a number of further benefits to the children it supports, to the council and the wider community:

- Teaches children to safely and successfully use public bus services
- Enables a more inclusive society
- Reduces the Council's carbon footprint, improves air quality and reduces congestion through the use of public bus routes, instead of taxis or other vehicles.
- Reduces the likelihood of the children incurring high travel costs when supported by adult social care services.

APSE Comment

Clear evidence of significant cost reductions, educational benefits and improved environmental outcomes provide a strong basis on which to pursue an Independent Travel service for SEND children in every local authority area.

Initial input would require officer resource and data regarding SEND children in Year 6 from which to draw a cohort of independent travellers for the first year. Collaboration at the outset with schools and local bus companies is advisable: In York, the YILTs team attend review meetings with SEND children in their school at key transition points at the end of yr 6, yr 11 and yr13/14 (Special Schools) to advise

on travel arrangements and the local bus company has provided subsidised passes to the YILTs cohort each year.

APSE would be glad to assist colleagues in member authorities looking to implement such a service in researching further examples of good practise, connecting colleagues with others who have already undertaken the same and through our Solutions team, providing service analysis to help demonstrate the rationale for this approach.

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