



Authority name: Wakefield

Service Area: Home to school transport

Introduction

The service operates under the statutory guidance from the Central Government which has been updated as of 29th June 2023. This is statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It is issued under the duties placed on the Secretary of State by sections 508A (7) and 508D (1) of the Education Act 1996. It replaces the previous Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance from 2014.

Local authorities are under a duty to have regard to this guidance when carrying out their duties in relation to:

- arrangements for travel to school for children of compulsory school age;
- the promotion of sustainable travel to school (this duty applies in relation to young people of sixth form age as well as children of compulsory school age).

The service asked for a review of the Home to School Transport service with regard to any improvements, effectiveness and efficiencies that could be made within the service.

The service requires a solution to better predict the budgetary pressures on the service. The report identifies the results of the current service offer, identification of issues relating to the service and suggestions to improve the service through data collection, cohesive and cross service working and updating policies and strategies in line with identified issues, future predictions and growth and national strategies.

Objectives:

- To investigate the increasing overspend on Home to School Transport spend
- To review the service delivery in terms of being fit for purpose
- To scrutinise the roles, recruitment and retention of the Passenger transport assistants
- Probe the new legislation alongside existing policy, strategy and delivery to ensure coherence and adherence

Outputs:

- A comprehensive review of new legislation alongside existing authority strategy and policy.
- Carry out an extensive stakeholder view and analysis.
- Analyse and compare the roles of Passenger Transport Assistants both nationally and locally with a view to improve recruitment and retention.
- Producing a desk top routing map of client routes and collection points to analyse efficiency and effectiveness.

Benefits:

- Identification of Passenger Transport Assistant development for retention and discover alternative forms recruitment.
- Establishment of assurances, that on the conclusion of the recommendations, the recommendations within the new legislation would be adhered to and be cohesive within the Authority's strategies and policies.
- Clear recommendations to update, improve and co-ordinate the Authority's policies and strategies
- Assurances that partnership working is bringing efficiency and effectiveness to the service delivery in the supply of service

Project summary:

The service in general runs well and parents feel the process of application is clear and concise. They have numerous sources to assist them with the completion of forms and understanding of the process. The procurement of travel services works efficiently and is provided by the agent to high standards of supply within the ideals of best value therefore providing a flexible service along with the transport team. The service delivery is let down by the need to recruit, retain and develop the Passenger Assistant Team, the recommendations reflect this. This has been developed in line with the new legislation but local strategies and plans need to be reviewed and updated to secure future progress.

Recommendations:

As a result of the review the following recommendations are proposed:

- All strategies, policies and plans need to be reviewed in light of their age. They should have clear goals with regard to delivering safe, sustainable, carbon efficient alternative travel for the residents and visitors of Wakefield district with an emphasis on the opportunity to deliver in new development areas particularly where they need to make links with existing communities.
- To develop a career progressive Passenger Transport Assistant role by rewriting the job descriptions and specifications with a view to producing an extended pay scale role for retention and recruitment purposes.
- In line with the above, develop a Personal Transport Assistant training programme linked to the development of NVQs and national recognition. This could be used across school transport and adult day care escorts to enable a cohesive approach to service delivery and provide flexibility.
- For recruitment to Passenger Transport Assistants it may be prudent to approach the Leeds Universities as the suggestion was met positively, although this would not give long term retention it could be a 3–4-year programme.
- For retention the Passenger Transport Assistants could possibly be a dual role with, say, adult day care escorts or youth centre staff.
- To work with Special schools to utilise vehicle usage.
- To work with schools to develop a more comprehensive independent travel programme.
- To review and develop the manual methods for Passenger Transport Assistant timesheets and Personal Transport budget payments as they are inefficient, with payment runs becoming unwieldy and expensive.

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