

Transformation of travel support for children and young people



Briefing 2 – November 2022

Following our update earlier this year to let you know about an independent review of travel support for children and young people, members of our children and families committee have now **agreed to move forward with plans to improve and modernise travel support for children and young people** across the borough over the next three years.

Why is there a need for change?

The impact of inflation and increased demand for school transport, in particular for children with special educational needs and disabilities, together with shortages in drivers, a reduction in the number of transport operators and the cost of fuel have all **affected the level of service we are able to provide to children and their families and put pressure on our budget**. These pressures on the service have given us the opportunity find ways to make improvements.

What change is proposed?

Over the next three years we propose to:

- Where appropriate, shift the offer to provide **'travel solutions'** for children and young people, including the increased and easier use of **personal travel budgets** and **independent travel training**. This will help families to make travel arrangements that best meet their needs.
- Work together with parents and carers to introduce a **customer charter** that sets clear expectations between parents, the council and transport providers.
- Create an **integrated travel team within the council** to provide a joined-up travel offer, consistent and fair policy and strategic direction;
- Greater use of software to **provide effective routes** to meet children's needs and best use of transport;
- Improve the way we **procure transport for children to make it more effective and to minimise change, which we know is really important for children**.

The individual needs of children and young people will be central to our plans. We know for some young people, travel training that provides practical support to travel by bus, on foot or bike can help them to travel independently, and without fear, so they can get to school or college. Others need a door-to-door service to meet their needs.

We recognise that the proposals will mean change for some of our children and families to improve their arrangements in the longer term, and we are **committed to working together with staff, parents, children, schools and other stakeholders to develop these new ways of working and to discuss individual arrangements**.

What difference will the change make?

The transformation of travel support aims to provide a number of benefits to children and families including:

- An improved service, which minimises change for children
- Fairer and more consistent decisions
- Better communication
- Flexibility through personal travel budgets
- Clearer expectations through the customer charter
- Improved independence for some children through support and training.

When will changes happen?

It is very **important that these changes work over the long term**. That is why we are proposing to introduce them in a phased way that is sensitive to needs of children and families.

We will be **prioritising work around personal travel budgets and independent travel** training for those families that want to benefit from these.

How can I get involved with/be updated on the review?

TOGETHER is our shared definition of coproduction in Cheshire East and it is essential that any changes are carried out together with our key stakeholders, including parent/carers of all children and young people who receive travel support to an education setting (including post-16), young people, schools and colleges, our workforce and providers. There will be lots of opportunities for parents and carers to participate. We will engage with parents throughout this process to ensure that the experiences of children and their families are considered in these changes.

Monthly meetings of key stakeholders, including parent/carer representatives, have been helping to shape our plans.

We will have **focus groups to inform developments** on areas of our policy and will **consult formally** with all those affected on all relevant policy changes.

We will continue to update all those affected through **briefings** such as this that will be emailed to parent/carers.

We have set up a [new inbox](#) where we will log all comments and input to the transformation of travel support for children and young people.

A new **webpage** is also being set up on Cheshire East's website to include updates on developments.

If your child has additional needs, then the **Parent Carer Forum** is keen to hear your views. See their website <https://cepcf.org/> for details of how to join or contact them.

Contacts

For general queries on the transformation of travel support, please contact:

Children's Travel Support Team at:

TravelSupportReview@cheshireeast.gov.uk