

## Appendix 2

### Home to school/ college travel consultation.

#### Consultation survey analysis

##### Introduction

This report provides the findings from the survey on the home to school transport consultation.

##### Background

The home to school travel consultation ran from 23 November 2021 and ended on 5 January 2022. There were two main aspects to the consultation:

1. 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'?

2. Discretionary travel provision

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
- 'vulnerable learners' 16-18 non-SEND
- 16-18 sixth form age with SEND
- Post 19 adult learners.

##### Methodology

A public report to the Council's Cabinet got approval for the consultation in November. Schools and colleges, parents whose children used home to school transport and other parties were emailed information about the consultation and invited to take part. There were two versions of the consultation paper – a full version with information on costs and context for home to school travel and a short easy read version.

A questionnaire survey was developed and was posted on the Council's website. Members of the public were able to access consultation information and submit a survey response online through the consultation pages on the Council's website. The questionnaire had free text boxes to allow written comments to be made on the main subject areas. Respondents were given the opportunity to submit written responses via a schools consultation email address. A member of staff filled in some questionnaires on behalf of respondents who were unable to access the website.

Focus groups were also held with pupils at Cricket Green School, Perseid School and the Raynes Park High School ASD provision. There were also two webinar sessions with Kids' First parents, facilitated by Merton Mencap, and a session with home to school travel staff.

There were 155 responses to the on-line survey, which are analysed in this report. There were six written submissions (see Appendix 1). Notes and findings from the consultation meetings are also recorded (see Appendix 2).

## 1. Respondents

### Summary:

155 people responded to the survey and filled in the on-line questionnaire

- 84 % of respondents were parents
- 80% of respondents had children who were using transport
- All of those were children or young people with Education & Health Care plans.

### Analysis

Those filling in the questionnaire were asked in what capacity they were completing the questionnaire:

Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this survey. We understand that more than one answer may apply, but please choose the one you feel is the most appropriate.

This single response question was answered by 155 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
A parent/carers	130	83.87%
A pupil or student	2	1.29%
School/college staff, including governors	15	9.68%
A Merton resident	5	3.23%
Other	3	1.94%

The 'Other' respondents were 2 transport providers and one former staff member of a special school.

Parents/carers were asked to select the school or college age group that applied to their children:

Please select the school or college age groups that apply to your children

This multiple response question was answered by 127 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Early years pupil (2-4 years old)	6	4.72%
Reception pupil (4-5 years old)	7	5.51%
Primary age pupil (5-11 years old)	58	45.67%
Secondary age pupil (11-16 years old)	67	52.76%
Post 16, sixth form aged student (16-18 years old)	16	12.60%
Post 19, adult learner (19-25 years old)	10	7.87%

Parents/carers were asked if their children used transport that is organised by the Council to get to and from school or college?

Do your children use transport that is organised by the Council to get to and from school or college?

This single response question was answered by 126 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes, they all do	66	52.38%
Some do, some don't	35	27.78%
No, none of them do	25	19.84%

100% (116 answers) of children had Education, Health and Care plans.

2 school students also completed the survey, one student with an Education, Health and Care plan and one without. One student attended a special school, the second student was in a mainstream school.

There were 13 respondents from the school community (staff or governors). They were asked what type of setting they were from:

Do you represent:

This single response question was answered by 13 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
A special school	6	46.15%
A mainstream primary school		
A mainstream secondary school	3	23.08%
A Further Education college		
An independent special school or college	3	23.08%
Other	1	7.69%

The 'Other' setting was 'a special unit within a mainstream primary school.

## 2. Independent Travel training

The first part of the survey asked for people's views on more independent forms of travel – independent travel training (ITT) and personal travel assistance budgets (PTABs).

### Summary:

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

The top three perceived benefits of independent travel training were:

### For young people:

- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence 70%
- Reduced reliance on family/friends to assist with travel needs 48%
- Increased opportunities to use public transport out of school hours 37%.

### For families:

- Less need for families to accompany young people 51%
- Family members have more time to do their own thing 48%
- Opportunities to access services/activities previously unavailable 38%.

The top three **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%
- Risk of getting lost or missing stop 36%.

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

### Analysis

All respondents were asked whether they were aware that Merton Council offered independent travel training to young people with special educational needs and disabilities; and then what they saw as the three biggest benefits for young people and for their families:

Did you know that Merton Council offers independent travel training to young people with special educational needs and disabilities?

This single response question was answered by 143 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	70	48.95%
No	55	38.46%
Not sure	18	12.59%

What are the three biggest benefits for a young person who is supported to travel independently on public transport, which allows them to access school, college and activities in the community?

This multiple response question was answered by 112 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Increased self-esteem and confidence	78	69.64%
Increased opportunities to use public transport as an individual or family at weekends, evenings and holidays	41	36.61%
Improved access to friends and social or leisure activities	34	30.36%
Improved access to educational opportunities	30	26.79%
Improved access to employment or vocational opportunities	36	32.14%
Reduced reliance on family members or friends to assist with travel needs	54	48.21%
Other	14	12.50%

What are the three biggest benefits for the family of a young person who is supported to travel independently on public transport?

This multiple response question was answered by 105 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Family members have more time to do their own thing e.g. study or employment	50	47.62%
Increased numbers of travel options available for family travel	34	32.38%
Reduced dependency on family or friends financially	38	36.19%
Less need for adults to accompany young person to and from places	54	51.43%
Opportunities to access community services and activities that were previously not accessible	40	38.10%
Positive changes in family relationships and interactions	22	20.95%
Other	13	12.38%

Respondents were then asked what they thought were the three biggest barriers that stopped children and young people using public transport independently.

What are the three biggest barriers that stop children and young people using public transport independently to access services and activities in the community?

This multiple response question was answered by 121 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Specific health needs cannot be supported on public transport	20	16.53%
Likelihood of bullying or being attacked	30	24.79%

Unable to access services and activities due to poor public transport links	3	2.48%
Limited awareness of danger or unable to keep safe	71	58.68%
Specific needs may place child/young person or member of the public at risk	44	36.36%
Wouldn't be able to manage situations that aren't planned or are out of routine	68	56.20%
Risk of getting lost or missing stop	44	36.36%
Unable to communicate with public transport staff or members of the public	40	33.06%
Has never used public transport before, even with an accompanying adult	4	3.31%
Not being able to access opportunities to learn the necessary skills to use public transport	4	3.31%
Family concern for the young person's safety and not allowing them the opportunity to try to travel on public transport independently	20	16.53%
Other	8	6.61%

Over 100 respondents made written comments on ITT by using the free text response box at the end of the section.

Typical responses were – a simple ‘this is not for me/my child’ statements, with more going into some detail as to why ITT was not appropriate for their child. This was often expressed in terms of their particular disability making accessing public transport difficult, if not impossible. “With my son’s disability independent travel would not be an option as it would be too dangerous for him”

Many made the point that it had to be assessed on a case by case basis. It’s ‘trial and error’ as one respondent put it; it might work for some and not for others. It can go either way for some children, particularly those with conditions that mean they have ‘good days and bad days’ with any form of transport. It can be hard enough to get them into a taxi, let alone travel on a bus.

There was a range of factors- the child’s needs, the journey itself and risk and safety- that were mentioned by a number of respondents. This was one:

Whilst I strongly agree my child should have access to independent travel training, the question about whether it is safe for him then to independently travel to a place of school / college / work is rather moot as it would depend on individual journey, complexity and also the general safety within the community such as gangs / gathering of other teenagers who can be cruel. Indeed in my experience having a special needs child is; some adults that you would hope could at least interact politely, are in fact unable to do so, let alone be helpful in a time of need.

Also frequently mentioned was the location of the schools that children attended- those out of borough were too far away and it would take too long to travel by public transport even if the young person was travel trained. Many children with SEN had long days anyway even if they were collected by a taxi.

If the council want to reduce travel costs then it needs to seriously up its game in providing appropriate and suitable SEN educational institutions that can cater for the local children's needs

Local schools have now raised their academic standards and are no longer willing to accept the children more in need. Thus pushing them further out.”

Training itself needed to be flexible- some children may take a long time to be travel trained; they may need re-enforcement and, in some cases, it was felt that training should extend to non-school routes and should not be constrained by budgets. Two respondents pointed to the possible negative effect on their children attending school for the full day as a result of travel training. A number felt ITT should also only be for children of secondary school age. One said that the lower age limit should be 11, another that it should be 16.

Four respondents spoke positively about their direct experiences with Merton Mencap who provide ITT for the Council. Three others said they found it difficult to get information about ITT, that they had applied and had heard nothing or that they had been on a waiting list for some time.

I thought the Mencap training was excellent. My son has thrived after the training and travels anywhere he wants now.

We have never been OFFERED it even though we have applied and it's even in my 17 year old's EHCP.

However, there were a further dozen or so positive comments about ITT and the benefits it had for young people for whom it was appropriate. One in particular talked about parental anxieties:

Our children also need to take some risks although in controlled and careful way. My son is independent but he sometimes gets lost and rings in a panic, we just deal with this. Similarly, he may cross a side-road without properly looking and get honked, but London traffic is not too fast - a small risk is worth it for the massive benefits of independent travel. My son now can find work and this would not ever have been possible without travel training. He would still be in a specialist setting costing the LA lots of money for education if he had not become independent and therefore 'mainstream'!

A couple of other respondents pointed to the importance of the young person's voice in the decision making process:

Post 16, young people's views should be primary if there is a disagreement with a parent (Code of Practice). Post 18, the parent should be involved, but does not need to be the first point of contact or the decision-maker if the person has capacity (with support) to understand the option of travel training (explained using pictures and shown the difference out in the community, for example). If someone is considered potentially capable by their school or college, they should no longer be offered assistance via bus or taxi if they refuse to take part. If they agree to be trained, you should retain transport of course until they are signed off and reassure parents that if travel training fails/breaks down, there can be retraining again and travel assistance for the period of difficulty i.e. it can be reinstated. This may make more parents agree to it. Once the young person is trained, there will be no looking back by them even if their parent is unsure. Young people want to be like their peers and want to be independent, as a rule.

### 3. Personal Travel Assistance budgets

#### Summary

People were asked if they were aware of Merton’s Personal Travel Assistance budgets (PTAB) scheme. The answers were:

- Yes (they were aware) 44%
- No (they were not aware) 46%
- Not sure 10%.

The top three **perceived benefits** of PTABs were:

- Greater control over travel arrangements 50%
- Flexibility to allow access to after school activities outside school/college 47%
- Shorter journey times for child or young person to school/college 40%

The top three **perceived barriers** to take up of PTABs were:

- Value of PTAB is too low 57%
- Family unable to identify and make a suitable travel arrangement 50%
- Family/young person work commitments 38%

More people (59%) disagreed than agreed (26%) with the statement that ‘the Council should encourage more young people and families to use a Personal Travel Assistance budget’.

A number of respondents commented on the complexity of the current system: “the system of providing receipts is too complex. An assessment of cost and then a lump sum per term would be much better. Slight overpayment is worth it in order to make admin easier for everyone”.

#### Analysis

First, respondents were asked if they were aware of the Merton’s personal travel budget scheme.

Did you know that Merton Council offers Personal Travel Assistance Budgets to the families of young people with special educational needs and disabilities?

This single response question was answered by 124 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	55	44.35%
No	56	45.16%
Not sure	13	10.48%

Then they were asked what they thought were the three biggest benefits of personal travel budgets from a list of eight statements.



Based on what you currently know about Merton's Personal Travel Assistance Budget (PTAB) scheme, what do you think are the three biggest benefits for families using a PTAB to make their own travel arrangements?

This multiple response question was answered by 100 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Being able to arrange travel around work commitments	22	22%
Being able to arrange travel around family/caring responsibilities	20	20%
Flexibility to allow access to after school activities/services outside of school/college	47	47%
Greater control over travel arrangements	50	50%
Ability to provide additional funding for bespoke travel needs if necessary	20	20%
Less likelihood of changes in travel arrangements resulting from other passengers	25	25%
Shorter journey times for child or young person to school or college	41	41%
Other	11	11%

And also, what they thought were the three biggest barriers to take up of personal travel budgets, from a list of eight statements:

What do you think are the top three barriers stopping a young person or their family using a Personal Travel Assistance Budget to make their travel arrangements for accessing school or college?

This multiple response question was answered by 111 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
The value of the Personal Travel Assistance Budget is too low	63	56.76%
Family&/young person's work commitments	42	37.84%
The Personal Travel Assistance Budget scheme is too complicated	30	27.03%
The distance to school or college is too far	41	36.94%
Worries about congestion, putting more vehicles on the road	23	20.72%
Family/young person unable to identify and arrange a suitable travel arrangement	56	50.45%
Don't have access to a suitable vehicle	27	24.32%
Other	9	8.11%

Respondents were then asked if they thought that the Council should encourage the take up of Personal Travel Assistance budgets.

To what extent do you agree with the statement:

The Council should encourage more young people and families to use a Personal Travel Assistance Budget to make their own travel arrangements to school or college.

This single response question was answered by 117 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	13	11.11%
Agree	18	15.38%
Disagree	39	33.33%
Strongly disagree	30	25.64%
Don't know	17	14.53%

More people disagreed with the statement than agreed with it.

There were 62 free text responses on PTBs.

36 were negative or sceptical on the use of PTABs. Main points were:

The value of the PTAB is too low

Journey times and long, even when the journeys are quite short, because of the traffic –“this is just not viable in either time or cost”

“I am against this as this would add to the pressure and stress to the family and carers of the young person as it would need significant effort and time in arranging and maintaining the daily travels. Family and carers of SEN young persons have enough on their plate as it is. Please don't add additional burden”.

The pressure on families was the most common comment made

A parent of a vulnerable/special needs child is always busy. Appointments, paperwork, hospital appointments, lack of sleep, caring duties. Are they now expected to arrange all this too so that Merton council can save money? It is ludicrous. - Merton has a duty. Do not push parents to go to tribunals for this too and further money is spent on all the fighting and stress.

A number felt it was better value for money, more efficient and better for the environment for a group of children to travel on a Council organised bus or minibus than it was to have individual children travelling in family cars.

It was also not practical for many families because of work and other commitments. Concerns were also expressed about the Council transferring risks to families and possible safeguarding risks with contractors.

A number of respondents, however, said they had not heard of it and that they might be interested, especially if the scheme were more generous than it is now:

In principle, we would be happy to join forces with other families using a PTBA in order to ensure a more practical and time efficient means of undertaking our school journey but only if it would mean an improvement.

Those who used it or had used it suggested that it – could be more flexible (they could do a morning journey if the Council could do the afternoon). One suggested A PTAB could help parents keep more in touch with the school their child attended, and another who said they were aware of parents who might well take it up.

A number said it was difficult to get good contractors – Community Transport had stopped doing it. One respondent was critical of the approved list of contractors that had been supplied:

The list of approved cab firms that the council give out is very poor. When I rang up, some of the cab firms acted as if they had no experience of taxiing school age children with SEN to school and were surprised that I should be contacting them.

A number of respondents commented on the complexity of the current system and the administrative burden associated with it (as well as the lack of advertising for the scheme):

I know they have been mentioned for very many years but not really been rolled out. If they are like the personal budgets/direct payments scheme for other services, it is not an easy scheme with lots of additional administration for parent carers on top of an ever increasing amount of paperwork, chasing up, appointments, caring roles etc

The system of providing receipts is too complex. An assessment of cost and then a lump sum per term would be much better. Slight overpayment is worth it in order to make admin easier for everyone”.

### **Discretionary provision**

The second part of the questionnaire asked about people's views of proposals to reduce home to school travel to the 'statutory minimum' or make changes to the way in which it was currently provided. Travel assistance to children or young people who are outside the age band of 5-16 years is known as discretionary provision as the council has a choice whether or not to provide it.

#### **4. Pre-school SEND support**

##### **Summary**

In response to the statement that the Council should **cease** to provide pre-school SEND travel support:

78% disagreed/strongly disagreed

16% agreed/strongly agreed

5% don't know.

In response to the statement that the Council should **continue** to provide pre-school SEND travel support, though **seek a financial contribution**:

52% disagreed/strongly disagreed

37% agreed/strongly agreed

10% don't know.

A number of comments were made along the lines of it being vital support for a small number of children with high special educational needs.

##### **Analysis:**

The Council currently provides travel assistances to a small number of children with special educational needs who are under the age of 5. Views were sought on 3 options – continue to provide free travel assistance for this group of children; cease to provide it, other than in exceptional circumstances; or, continue to provide it while seeking a financial contribution towards the cost of transport from parents/carers.

The statement was put to respondents that the Council should continue to provide free travel for pre-school age children with SEND:

**The Council should continue to provide free travel assistance for pre-school age children with special educational need and disabilities**

**This single response question was answered by 109 respondents.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage of Respondents</b>
Strongly agree	70	64.22%
Agree	30	27.52%
Disagree	5	4.59%

Strongly disagree	0	0.0%
Don't know	4	3.67%

Then views were sought on whether the Council should cease to provide free travel to this group other than in exceptional circumstances:

The Council should cease to provide travel assistance for pre-school age children with special educational needs and disabilities, other than in exceptional circumstances		
This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	7	7.14%
Agree	9	9.18%
Disagree	35	35.71%
Strongly disagree	42	42.86%
Don't know	5	5.10%

And finally, whether the Council should continue to provide free school travel for pre-school age children with SEND, but to seek a financial contribution towards the cost of transport from parents and carers:

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for pre-school age children with special educational need and disabilities, though seek a financial contribution from parents/carers towards the cost of transport		
This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	12	12.24%
Agree	25	25.51%
Disagree	28	28.57%
Strongly disagree	23	23.47%
Don't know	10	10.20%

There were 33 written responses.

Only one supported the idea of withdrawing support:

They are not by law required to be in school so it's not a priority

Two or three supported the idea of introducing charges/parental contributions towards the cost of transport and, if these were applied, they should be means tested.

The following three examples were the most common type of response:

- Early intervention is key for a lot of children with disabilities meaning it can be vital to access specialist education early on. Having transport for pre-school age children is also vital for the children to be able to access specialist

education and to stop them being disadvantaged compared to their peers who have more flexibility on the settings they can choose to access.

- From past experience, we as a family found it difficult and challenging when there was no provision. Once we received the provision, that put our minds at rest that a trained escort was with our child and they could make their journey safely to their special needs nursery.
- Having proper access to pre-school is vital for disabled young children - if you create barriers, whether these are administrative or financial, the children will miss out. Not all families will have the resources (money, ability and time) to arrange this themselves, and the most likely impact will be for those children who are already disadvantaged. You should be doing everything you can to improve access to education not putting up barriers which are likely to impact attendance.

Others made the point, that if the council was providing support for only a small number of children at present, then those children and families must be those with the greatest need.

- If the council need to save money, then it should not be at the expense of people who are vulnerable and disproportionately affected by cuts to all public services.

It would also be hard to define what were 'exceptional circumstances' if that became the new criterion for qualifying for travel assistance.

## 5. Post 16 – support for ‘vulnerable learners’

### Summary

This is support for students aged 16 or over from low income families or who are ‘vulnerable learners’, such as care leavers, and provides largely financial support for additional costs of travel to college or other placements.

79% agreed/strongly agreed that it should continue

12% disagreed/strongly disagreed that it should continue

9% don’t know.

### Analysis

The current policy allows additional support beyond the assistance provided by Transport for London. However, so far, no students have been supported this academic year and no students were supported last academic year.

There were two options. Respondents were asked should it continue to support this group:

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students from low income families and /or students who are vulnerable learners and age 16-18 years		
This single response question was answered by 105 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	45	42.86%
Agree	38	36.19%
Disagree	9	8.57%
Strongly disagree	4	3.81%
Don't know	9	8.57%

And also, whether it should cease to support this group:

The Council should cease to provide travel assistance for students from low income families and /or students who are vulnerable learners and age 16-18 years		
This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	8	8.16%
Agree	14	14.29%
Disagree	31	31.63%
Strongly disagree	36	36.73%
Don't know	9	9.18%

There were 31 written responses on this topic.

A number said they were unaware of this policy and that it was not clear what it meant.

In the view of some, policies like this were a lifeline for vulnerable young people. They should be publicised. That nothing was being spent at the moment was not a reason for taking it away. There was 'no harm' in having a policy like this in place.

We need to support these families to ensure that crime is low and future pressure on mental health services is low and that young people are able to achieve and pursue their dreams and contribute in a positive way in future.

Others pointed to the role of travel assistance in ensuring access to education:

- Education and attendance at safe places for learning is crucial for this age group. There should not be any financial barriers to attendance or additional impact on a family where this does not occur amongst the young person's peer group.
- Have you done any robust assessments on whether removing travel assistance for this population has had an impact on attendance or access to education? This feels very contrary to providing equal opportunities and helping to lift people out of poverty or vulnerable situations. Surely it is more cost effective to do everything you can to get them into education and remove barriers to this, rather than pick up the costs of this not happening and these young people having more limited prospects for not having gone to school or college in the way they might have done.

One respondent commented that support should only be for 'vulnerable students' not those from low income backgrounds, another that it was not necessary as, unlike students with SEND, these students would or should be attending local colleges and would be covered by TfL's travel offer.

## **6. 16-18 – support for sixth form age with SEND**

### **Summary**

These are students aged 16-18 years with an Education, Health and Care plan who attend an approved course of study. More than 70 students a year receive travel assistance. There are four options:

Option 1- continue to provide support as it is now

96% agreed/strongly agreed

3% disagreed/strongly disagreed

1% don't know

Option 2- cease to provide other than in exceptional circumstances:

15% agreed/strongly agreed

84% disagreed

1% don't know

Option 3- continue to provide though seek a financial contribution

33% agreed/strongly agreed



59% disagreed/strongly disagreed

7% don't know

Option 4 – continue to provide, but only for those with the most severe or complex SEND

40% agreed/strongly agreed

56% disagreed/strongly disagreed

4% don't know.

A number of comments – particularly on Option 4 on defining 'most severe or complex'.

**Rank Order** – respondents were then asked to rank the options in order of preference, with number 1 as their first choice, number 2 as their second and so on:

The Council should:

- a. Continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years?

81% ranked this first

7% ranked it second

4% ranked it third

8% ranked it fourth

- b. Cease to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, other than in exceptional circumstances?

0% ranked this first

17% ranked it second

20% ranked it third

62% ranked it fourth

- c. Continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, though seek a financial contribution from parents or students themselves towards the costs of transport?

3% ranked this first

43% ranked it second

42% ranked it third

12% ranked it fourth

- d. Continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, but only for those students who have the most severe or complex special educational needs or disabilities?

17% ranked this first

32% ranked it second

33% ranked it third

17% ranked it fourth.

What this seems to show is that limiting provision to those with the most severe or complex special educational needs is somewhat more acceptable than seeking financial contributions.

### Analysis

Option 1 – continue to provide support as it is now.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should continue to provide travel support for 16-18 year olds with SEND:

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years)		
This single response question was answered by 102 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	75	73.53%
Agree	23	22.55%
Disagree	2	1.96%
Strongly disagree	1	0.98%
Don't know	1	0.98%

Option 2- cease to provide other than in exceptional circumstances:

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should cease to provide travel support for 16-18 year olds with SEND:

The Council should cease to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, other than in exceptional circumstances		
This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	6	6.12%
Agree	9	9.18%
Disagree	35	35.71%
Strongly disagree	47	47.96%
Don't know	1	1.02%

Option 3- continue to provide though seek a financial contribution from parents/carers or students themselves.

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students aged 16-18 years with SEND, but seek a financial contribution towards the cost of travel:

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, though seek a financial contribution from parents or students themselves towards the costs of transport

This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	12	12.24%
Agree	21	21.43%
Disagree	33	33.67%
Strongly disagree	25	25.51%
Don't know	7	7.14%

Option 4- continue to provide, but only for those with the most sever or complex SEND

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students aged 16-18 years with SEND, but restrict it to those with the most sever or complex special educational needs or disabilities:

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, but only for those students who have the most severe or complex special educational needs or disabilities

This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	19	19.39%
Agree	20	20.41%
Disagree	24	24.49%
Strongly disagree	31	31.63%
Don't know	4	4.08%

Respondents were then asked to put each of the 4 options into rank order:

Please rank the options for travel assistance for students aged 16-18 who have special educational needs or disabilities in order of preference, with number 1 being your first choice, number 2 your second choice and so on.

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years

This single response question was answered by 98 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
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1	79	80.61%
2	7	7.14%
3	4	4.08%
4	8	8.16%

Please rank the options for travel assistance for students aged 16-18 who have special educational needs or disabilities in order of preference, with number 1 being your first choice, number 2 your second choice and so on.

The Council should cease to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, other than in exceptional circumstances

This single response question was answered by 93 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1		
2	16	17.20%
3	19	20.43%
4	58	62.37%

Please rank the options for travel assistance for students aged 16-18 who have special educational needs or disabilities in order of preference, with number 1 being your first choice, number 2 your second choice and so on.

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, though seek a financial contribution from parents or students themselves towards the costs of transport

This single response question was answered by 93 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	3	3.23%
2	40	43.01%
3	39	41.94%
4	11	11.83%

Please rank the options for travel assistance for students aged 16-18 who have special educational needs or disabilities in order of preference, with number 1 being your first choice, number 2 your second choice and so on.

The Council should continue to provide travel assistance for students who have special educational needs and disabilities and are age 16-18 years, but only for those students who have the most severe or complex special educational needs or disabilities

This single response question was answered by 93 respondents.

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1	16	17.20%

2	30	32.26%
3	31	33.33%
4	16	17.20%

There were 29 responses.

Most argued that free travel should continue to be provided for students aged 16-18, with or without SEND.

In terms of the options put forward for consultation, points were made that:

**On charging** - Disabled 16-18 should be able to access the same opportunities their peers have. If a non-disabled 16-18 still gets free travel then so should a disabled person. Until London's transport system is accessible to all, 16-18s should have this vital service.

**On restricting it to those with the 'most severe' needs**- Who will be the arbiter of what is considered 'severe' and 'complex'? Does transport have that expertise? You will end up spending as much time and money defending your decisions and ending up in appeal processes/challenges as you will save in cutting this provision. Please do not cut provision for young people who are not able to fight these proposals due to their social circumstances and vulnerabilities. If you plan to proceed then you must do a thorough impact assessment, which is publicly available, and be comfortable with the unintended consequences for young people who - if they are on your books - already grapple with life's challenges more than most.

There was a limited amount of support for the idea of encouraging more independent forms of travel for this group, such as travel training and travel budgets. There were a few respondents accepting the idea of charging, though others noted that it would be a burden on families and would, as suggested in the consultation paper, raise only £55,000 for the Council.

Other comments were made about the quality of local provision in Merton and, hence, the need for young people to travel further afield to find suitable school or college places. Merton needed to 'up its game' in providing better places locally.

A number of critical comments were made about the structure of the questionnaire, in particular, the question that asked people to put the four options for 16-18 SEND support into rank order.

## 7. Adult learners – post 19

### Summary

These are students with an Education, Health and Care Plan who start a course of study following their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Local authorities have a duty to make transport arrangements that they think are necessary for students with EHCPs in residential education or attending further education colleges.

There are two options:

Option 1- continue to provide support as it is now:

84% agreed/strongly agreed

7% disagreed/strongly disagreed

4% don't know

Option 2- cease to provide support:

10% agreed/strongly agreed

83% disagreed

6% don't know.

### Detail

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should continue to provide travel support for adult learners with SEND:

The Council should continue to provide free home to college transport for adult learners who have an Education, Health and Care Plan		
This single response question was answered by 101 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	62	61.39%
Agree	28	27.72%
Disagree	6	5.94%
Strongly disagree	1	0.99%
Don't know	4	3.96%

Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Council should cease to provide travel support for adult learners with SEND:

The Council should cease to provide free home to college transport for adult learners who have an Education, Health and Care Plan		
This single response question was answered by 94 respondents.		
Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Strongly agree	5	5.32%

Agree	5	5.32%
Disagree	34	36.17%
Strongly disagree	44	46.81%
Don't know	6	6.38%

There were 21 comments.

As with 16-18 year olds, comments were made about the role of travel assistance in enabling access to educational places. Young adults should not miss out on further education just because they have a disability. There was a clear equalities issue:

It is really important that disabled adults are not prevented from participating in further education because they cannot get to and from the college/university of their choice. It's highly discriminatory and not in line with the DDA.

A number of comments were made to the effect that continuing education had a positive impact on their lives- the question raised, why make it unviable for them by stopping transport?

Travel assistance is very much appreciated and in my own case has been essential to my continued employment. Removing this service would be very detrimental to many families' economic and mental wellbeing.

Others said that some financial contribution towards the cost of travel would be acceptable. In one case:

There may be a case to financially assess such support (as with an Adult Social Care plan) but this should only be based on the young person's income and there should be support from the council to ensure successful outcomes from PIP/Universal Credit/other benefit applications. The family or the young person should never be disadvantaged, either financially or in time spent, from the continuance of education post 19.

## Any other comments

The final question asked for any other comments. There were 29 responses and these are here in full:

1. Children and young people in Merton and their families rely on Local Authority travel assistance in order to access education and all the other benefits that being a part of a school community brings, e.g. friendships, social interaction, well-being, a sense of belonging. Please do not reduce or withdraw this support and make the lives of vulnerable people and their families any more challenging.
2. Dear Merton, The withdrawal of transport for children and young people sends a clear message that they do not value the education of children with SEN and it puts them at even more of a disadvantage in terms of life chances. Disabled children deserve an education too, but because specialist schools are often long distances away from their homes, they are reliant upon council-funded transport to get them to school or college. For parents with children already at other schools, it is impossible to be in two places or even three places at once, especially when those places are miles apart. For many children and young people, no transport means that they will not be able to access their school or college.
3. Do not put SEN families under more pressure as they are already struggling with the cuts. It has an impact on the family as a whole. It is worrying to read what awaits our vulnerable kids. Please stop punishing families of SEN child and the SEN individuals themselves. We have been constantly having cuts and services reduced and more money is spent on useless external consultants doing reviews. Put families first.
4. Each child's needs will be different, think travel should be offered with options that can be chosen.
5. I absolutely appreciate the pressure on council budgets and your need to try and economise where possible, but this really feels like it is targeted at some of those who are least able to stand up for themselves.
6. I am very grateful for this service and would like to see it continue for those in similar circumstances to my own.
7. I cannot repeat this enough, so I will repeat again: If the council want to reduce travel costs then it needs to seriously up its game in providing appropriate and suitable SEN educational institutions that can cater for the local children's needs. Especially for autistic children who are academically capable but need help with functional/living skills or need access to various therapies. The local lack of choice is appalling. I would love to send my son to a local sixth form but there is not an institution for miles that can cater to his needs. Until you have done this you really should not be talking about cutting any travel budgets.
8. I do not under any circumstance think that children of primary school age should be made to travel to school when the school is chosen by the council and is more than 3 miles away from Their home
9. I know finances are imperative, but please have the needs of the child / young person and their families in the forefront of your minds and decision making. Also the questions regarding the benefits of independent travel and PTAB's in his questionnaire are very leading and should not be taken out of context with regards to the rest of the questionnaire!
10. I think that every child with an EHCP is entitled to travel because it does provide some independency for the children. To go to and from school without a Parent as it's a safe environment for them.
11. It is very important to ensure that we don't lose sight of fact that these children need transport because of their needs. If my son was to take public transport to his school 60 miles away daily, he would arrive at school stressed out, would need downtime to settle down after each journey leg and would not be productive at home to do homework or study. Essentially this would compromise his education entirely. Also, as he boards at school (which is cheaper than transport daily), he has a lot of gear to take weekly - about 4-5 volumes including suitcase, guitar, PE bag, school backpack which he wouldn't be able to carry on the train.
12. I've seen many children who could be brought to school via a parent/carer that are allocated school bus places, and children who live out of the borough who should be in schools within their borough to save on private taxi fares, which are extortionate. I've seen some bus drivers / assistants not seem to be trained very well in managing behaviour/melt downs, so they refuse to transport certain children which leads to them having to have their own taxi, which is further money spent, when really the transport staff just need better training and manners to be able to keep the child able to be transported on the bus. I don't think school buses should be privatised as more money tends to be spent paying the private company than would be on maintenance and management of the council's own buses...
13. Like said about some families have more than one child and may have more than 1 child on a ehcp
14. My son is boarding at an out of borough independent placement. The taxi routes are poorly planned. Firstly, there are missed opportunities for children who board to share transport with the day pupils who also come in taxis. Secondly, the way the taxis are split is often not logical and sometimes inefficient with regard to costs. Thirdly, pick-up points would be possible for this particular school because most of the children would be able to reach these independently or parents would be happy to drop them. This would save the Council some money. Parents of children who attend this school (5 - 10 children), should be involved in planning the routes at the start of the year.
15. No one chooses to have a disabled child and families need to be supported to look after that child/young person when their needs diverge from that of the accepted norm, e.g. being able to go to their nearest school, being



- able to deal with travel on public transport, travelling independently to secondary schools, moving out of the home and going to university. Children and young people should never be disadvantaged, or not able to follow an educational route as their peer group might do because there is a cost attached to getting them there
16. Overall, a disappointing survey questionnaire. Children and young people with special needs and their family and carers need support and not withdrawing support! Reading between the lines, it seems the council is finding ways of withdrawing and reducing support. To target children and young people with special needs is very sad indictment. I'm heartbroken by what I am seeing.
  17. Overall, I think Merton do a good job with this. I would say that the travel arrangements are put in place at the last minute before the start of each school year and there are sometimes some decisions made in relation to routes which appear illogical but the team are generally responsive in trying to resolve issues. Perhaps greater collaboration with parents could be helpful and earlier planning before the start of the school year might make the process of planning a bit easier?
  18. Parents in general do not use council resources without needing to,
  19. Please don't take away this very valuable service. Without it I will have to give up my job as a teacher to be able to get my son to and from school.
  20. Stop making cuts to SEND. It's vital for them.
  21. The council should continue to provide home to school transport for children with special needs as this allows the parents one less thing to worry about in an already stressful & challenging situation of having a special needs child. The parents will feel supported by the council.
  22. The current options reduce the chance of children with disabilities accessing after school clubs etc. Where a child travels alone in a taxi, the option to select the pickup time to enable after school clubs should be available otherwise they are unfairly discriminated against accessing these. Many special schools are a long distance from family homes and the LA transport is the only option for families with other children.
  23. The service my son uses with a bus to his primary school is very good. I couldn't work if I had to get him to school myself and would then be unemployed, which would be a far greater financial burden on the state than his transport costs. The impact on carers of withdrawing transport or imposing costs would be very negative.
  24. This is very disappointing, I am sorry.
  25. Travel assistance for vulnerable children and young adults is an essential service which should not be cut. This survey is of a worrying quality - I fear it will generate data which could be unintentionally misrepresentative of the views of respondents
  26. Travel training needs to be organised before starting secondary school. Our son had disruption as he had to take a taxi with someone he did not know for first few weeks which was very hard for an autistic young person
  27. Until there is sufficient provision within a reasonable distance from their home, transport is the only way that many, many children and young people with SEND can access a level of education to which all are entitled.
  28. Work with kids first. Change the system but do not stop travel for children. The mini cab firm model could be adapted.
  29. You have decided to cut costs. This confusingly worded section seems designed purely to give you wonky statistics to justify this.

## Appendix 1 : written submissions

### Response to consultation from Merton Liberal Democrats: Home to school travel assistance

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this consultation on possible changes to the council's home to school/college travel assistance policy, primarily for children with SEND

#### Summary

We understand that parents often face difficulties with home-to-school transport and that the law in this area can be complicated. There can also be confusion around what a local authority's duties and services are – and there are a number of comments in the consultation document that indicate that there is evidence that some in Merton have difficulties accessing current services. So we think that a key outcome of this consultation should be publication of clear and unambiguous information and guidance and support.

We note the comment in the consultation document that “Almost all of the expenditure is on providing transport for children with special educational needs to special schools and other settings, inside and outside the borough's boundaries”. We wonder therefore if the focus of the consultation (saving money by cutting services) is wrong. The better focus would surely be ensuring local provision of appropriate support first, which would have as a consequence the saving of money on transport.

#### Context

We believe that the aim should be to provide support to help children and families live the best lives they are able, by living their lives as they determine. Practical and personal financial constraints can restrict such. And this applies most keenly by those with SEND.

We also note the comments of groups such as IPSEA:

“Unfortunately, we are aware that a lot of Local Authorities do not reflect the law in their home to school transport policies. [Research by Contact](#) in 2017 found that over 50% of Local Authority transport policies included unlawful restrictions (similar findings were made in [research by Cerebra and the University of Leeds](#) in the same year).

In particular, many local policies do not reflect the tests established by the Court of Appeal such as in the *Dudley* case. It is well established that law is developed and, in some cases, made, by judges via the creation of legal precedents, through court decisions. As such, this could only be changed by either a decision of the Supreme Court or a change in the statute law itself.”

We believe that publicising anonymised complaints made to Merton about SEND travel policies, along with complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, would give greater transparency on Merton's performance in this area. If there are lessons to be learned, it will be clearer what these are and what is being done in response.

#### Comments on shifting the focus from organised transport

Our view here is that the consultation should focus on what is best valued by users. The fear is that the primary motivation behind the consultation is to cut costs. From speaking to some users and potential users of organised transport services, their parents/carers, and colleagues in other

authorities, we know that independent travel training and personal travel budgets work well for some. We would suggest that any change in policy in this area consider how it both identifies and supports those who struggle with these changes. We reiterate comments above on ease of accessing services.

#### **Comments in response to proposed changes to discretionary policy**

We question the value of the consultation responses that will be received here given the emphasis in the consultation document that the aim is to “understand views of the impact of the Council ceasing its ‘discretionary’ transport support, other than in ‘exceptional circumstances’”.

We are unsure why anyone would positively champion the cutting of services. If Merton’s administration chooses to cut services and funding here that is a choice it has made about priorities.

We would note that the identified proposals for parental contributions do not seem worth pursuing – comprising the recovery of only a small amount of the budget from groups that, broadly, tend to have lower incomes and higher costs.

## Submission from JD

Dear Councillor Stringer

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at the webinar today. As you may have gathered, my son has been through the process of SEN transport and I felt I should share some thoughts with you. For context my son is 23 and a half, currently has an EHCP in place and has ASD/MLD, so it is important to consider the communication and process of transport through that lens. I've realised that I have quite a lot to share so have prepared a Word doc attachment rather than sending a long e-mail.

I have also copied in Councillor Lanning, as once a child becomes an adult the issue of transport to educational placements seems to cross over with her remit and any work done in formative years will pay off into adulthood.

The main issues that I have noted are:

- Parents need assurance that a journey will be as safe as possible. Every parent worries about their children travelling alone but I cannot overstate the worry and anxiety for a parent, in letting a child with a disability, particularly a hidden one, travel on their own.
- Travel does not seem to be viewed as integral to the education process but rather something that is just necessary to attend education.
- An apparent lack of 'blue-sky' thinking as to how wider-community peer groups/mainstream school cohorts could be galvanised to support safe travel – or generally support and engage with SEND young people at all.
- Commissioning of services often seems poorly done.
- A lack of understanding as to how a young person's ability to travel is reflected in any written documents that could be used to support applications for PIP/Universal Credit payments that could support travel costs, coupled with a lack of understanding of the work required of parents/carers to deal with such applications.
- A lack of understanding as to the length of time that is needed to ensure that someone who does not learn through experience can embed travel skills – repetition, repetition, repetition is needed for a sufficiently long enough period of time.
- Little being done on a borough-wide basis to facilitate the availability of PAs to support travel training/help develop travel skills – especially difficult to find if you are asking someone to work from 8.15-9.15am and 3-4pm, for instance.
- The lack of an officially designated 'buddy' on buses/trains/trams that a young person can turn to if there is a problem. TfL staff do not seem to see this as part of their role. TfL also offer little in the way of travel training for any except the most able.
- Little recognition of the impact on parent/carers who whilst having to deal with earning a living, might be expected to facilitate a young person's travel to a college or placement.
- Road junctions and crossing points that do not stop all the traffic for long enough/are phased incorrectly.
- 16-19 may find themselves unable to attend the right education provision because their families cannot financially support their travel costs.

Obviously everyone's needs are different. I would support moves to ensure that as many young people as possible can travel independently but I do not think it is as simple as reducing the level of discretionary support currently offered and I remain to be convinced that a model that reduces costs for education could provide a robust and effective springboard into independent adult life. Independent doesn't have to mean not organised but could mean organised differently with a recognition that costs will still be incurred.

## Home to school travel story

We didn't access SEN transport to school until my son started at secondary school and had to travel to St Philip's in Chessington. His journey to school was made by minibus taxi with a varying number of other students from Merton. The key issues for us were:

- For a while, I was unable to change my working hours and had to ask the after school club at the next door primary if they could take my son rather than have him delivered to an empty house. This meant that I had to rush out of work to be able to pick up before the club closed.
- A lack of clear information at the start of each school year as to when the taxi was scheduled to pick him up and who the taxi driver would be. This had impacts on my ability to be able to give my employer a clear idea of my start times until this had been sorted out. My son worried about this for some weeks prior to the start of term because we could not give him an accurate answer on the taxi arrival time.
- The actual arrival time of the taxi each day and the lack of communication when a pick-up was delayed (which had a big impact on my son's anxiety levels and my ability to get to work on time).
- The quality of drivers – one was actually involved in an accident at the West Barnes Lane level crossing with students on board, we only discovered this through a throwaway comment made by my son.
- The inflexibility of pick-up times to come home from school. The school had an extra-curricular club, specifically for language and communication, that my son was unable to attend unless I organised my work hours to be able to pick him up. The taxi company were still paid for this journey.
- A lack of supervision for students travelling other than from the driver.
- Once my son moved into 6<sup>th</sup> form at the same school, a continued insistence that someone be in the house to let him in. We had no concerns about his ability to be alone in the house for half an hour until I returned home and viewed this as independence building.
- The total loss of an opportunity over a long period of time, for independence skills building by making the journey via taxi.
- And a consideration nowadays, the environmental unsustainability of sending a diesel vehicle on a round trip of Merton to pick up and drop off students.

Whilst my son was at the school, he benefitted from a period of travel training delivered directly by Merton Mencap (not commissioned by LBM) to enable him to make the one bus journey between Raynes Park and Wimbledon to attend the Mencap Aspirations club every Sunday. R [a travel trainer] worked with my son for the best part of 18 months, once a week on a Sunday, to learn how to deal with this journey – from leaving home, crossing safely at a major junction, waiting at a bus stop, stopping the right bus, using a travel card, where to sit on the bus, where to get off and cross safely and most importantly how to deal with the social niceties of travel and how to keep himself safe in relation to other travellers. Sadly, the club had to move venue so my son was only able to practice this journey for a short period of time. It was agreed with R that the amount of training required to get to the club in its new venue in North Mitcham, was not viable.

Also, whilst at St Philips, following a transport review where I flagged up an interest in travel training, Mencap were commissioned by the LA. The journey from our house to St Philips is best done by train to Chessington South, which involved arriving there at the same time as students from Chessington Community College. After a few weeks travel training was stopped by the trainer because she did not feel she could safely deliver a complete package in the time that had been

allocated – taking into account all the things that could go wrong with train travel, the potential dangers and interaction with Chessington Community College students between station and school.

In all around 8 years of potential training for independent travel were lost through a taxi transport to Chessington and it should be borne in mind that this would have been the case had my son attended the in-borough provision that was full at the time of his admittance to St Philips, as SEN transport would have been required to attend there as well.

After St Philips, at age 19, my son was placed at Aurora (South Thames College) in Morden. We chose Aurora as a local college because we were keen for our son to be able to make the journey to college independently. In retrospect, we should have looked at placements elsewhere. Travel training was arranged. R was commission to work with my son for one morning session and one afternoon session per week. For the remaining 6 sessions of travel, I had to arrange for an agency PA, via direct payments, to support my son and follow exactly the same route and travel philosophy as R. This arrangement gave rise to high levels of anxiety for my son, as PAs would often not arrive on time and my son would become worried about arriving late for college with the same repeated for the return journey, necessitating the college to contact me on a regular basis. Due to the complexity of the journey, this arrangement lasted for the whole of a first term and a few weeks into the second until R was confident that my son was able to undertake the journey.

My son was able to make the journey by himself for some time during which we had to deal with issues such as his bus stop being shut for gas/water repairs and numerous daily calls whilst he was on the bus and worried about being late. He also experienced two incidents on the bus that caused him to become mentally unwell. After each event we had to go through the process of finding a PA (and getting that funded) to support him on bus journeys (and deal with the anxieties caused by PAs not arriving on time) until he felt confident to travel by himself.

Covid kicked in and following Aurora, my son moved to a placement in Balham which started in Sept 2020, he attended physically for the time the college offered this. The journey by public transport was totally inaccessible for him/would have taken a significant part of his placement year and a taxi transport was put in place. I queried the cost at approx. £96 per day and asked what the situation would be if we, as a family, supported the journey. I was told we would receive a figure approximately half that paid to a taxi firm to organise our own transport, or could be paid the mileage allowance for spending around 3-4 hours a day driving in heavy traffic to facilitate my son's attendance at the placement. I declined the offer and was content to let the LA pick up the cost. The taxi was often late, the first driver disappeared having fallen out with the proprietor and claiming not to have been paid. Drivers did not understand they should wear masks and ventilate the cars and I had to raise this on a number of occasions. From this experience, I feel that there may well be an issue with commissioning of taxi services as I am aware that the company that provided the service was dropped after a year.

My son now attends a 3 day per week Work Start course with Orchard Hill college at the Searchlight centre in Kingston. This is a one bus journey with clear crossing points at the start and end. I spent some 4 weeks at the beginning of term completing the journey in both directions with my son to ensure that we had identified any potential pitfalls and that he was confident. I'm not sure many parents of a 'normal' 23-year-old need to do that.

As my son moved into adulthood, I entered the happy world of adult social care and also had to go through the change from DLA to PIP payments. This necessitated a face-to-face meeting with an assessor. Fortunately, I am the Appointed Person for DWP purpose and could attend that interview.

I found myself have to explain that the social worker's assertion that my son was an 'independent traveller' in his care plan was incorrect and that he could only deal with simple journeys that were planned for him and for which he had received a substantial amount of training.

I've also experienced a PA taking my son to someone else's home whilst travelling with him from an activity to home thus raising a safeguarding concern.

### Written responses

#### 1. From: PM

My point of view

- This wouldn't work for LM (due to his anxiety)
- This wouldn't work for LM (due to him tell GP and other professional he wants to kill himself by walking into the road)

The transport LM has in place is working very well and he is been independent by talking to the staff and is going by himself (without me/mum which he needs).

LM been in a car with someone else is helping him in so many ways, he feels confident and comfortable with this.

I believe and would state each child is individual and has different disabilities, transport must take it into account.

#### 2. From: VM

My son has ADHD, ASD and sodium valproate syndrome so there will be taxi transportation for him until he leaves school, but thanks for the offer.

#### 3. From: MSD

My son O is a student at Cressey college. If transport is In Fact stopped for O then O will no longer be able to attend Cressey college. When the council were looking at schools I was told by the man they had applied to over 250 schools and was told Cressey college was the only school that would take O on.

The reasons why O NEEDS transport are as follows;

- to get to Cressey college on public transport would be a tram from Belgrave walk to east Croydon, then another tram from east Croydon to Lloyd park then walk a mile from the tram stop to Cressey college. O cannot cope on public transport especially in rush hour commuting time. I did In Fact try using public transport when he first joined and it didn't work.
- I cannot physically afford to drive O to school, it would cost roughly £50 (just of the top of my head) a week and I am un-employed carer and physically do not have that money for petrol.
- it is a council chosen school, not chosen by myself. So for the council to say this is the only school O can attend then say that transport is down to me is completely unfair.

- the school is over 3 miles door to door in fact nearer to 5miles and the council policy is that a school further than 3 miles makes you Eligible for transport.
- if transport for O is stopped then the council would need to find a school that would take O to as O would no longer be able to attend Cressey college.

**4. From: TV**

My child receives transport because she has autism she gets extremely anxious and can and will refuse to go in public transport and cannot handle a lot of people on public transport which is why she will not travel at all on public transport, she cannot follow routes keep to time managements and can become very stressed and forget what she is doing. My child travels by taxi to a special needs school which is 11 miles away because no school would take her in the area and we're limited spaces. I also care for another vulnerable person whom with her conditions at most days cannot leave the house so I myself would not be able to transport my daughter to and from school or college.

My daughter would not be able to do travel training because of her extreme anxiety issues either, once my daughter gets to the age for college which will not be long she still would not be able to do travel assistance and would still require transport services even though people will still try to get her to do travel training which I'm aware of as I have nieces and nephews with severe autism who have had to do the same and be put through the extreme distress to then be told no you need travel services still, for the people that still require the services of travel to and from educational settings for any changes to be made that anything changes and unable to access this service or to go through travel training when they are aware of their mental health issues or parents unable to get their children to and from far schools this would be an issue if made mandatory.



## School travel consultation

Kids' First webinar 10.00 Friday 3 December 2021

Cllr Eleanor Stringer, Tom Procter, Philip Wells

Tuhina Shaikh, Kids First administrator.

19 participants

Power Point presentation on the consultation.

Questions/ issues raised:

### 1. Questionnaire survey

That the survey is not fit for purpose.

Answer: it is only one of a number of ways of responding to the consultation. The free text boxes in the questionnaire allow for written comments. You can also email. Yes, all responses will be analysed. There is a further Kids First webinar on Tuesday 14 December in the evening.

### 2. 'Inclusive forms of transport'

What is meant by promoting 'inclusive forms of transport'?

Answer: it's about trying to shift the emphasis away from organised transport such as taxis to things like independent travel training and personal travel budgets- one enables young people to use public transport themselves, the second enables families to make their own arrangements to get their children to and from school, including pooling resources with other families. Of course, there will always be some young people for whom a specialist minibus or a taxi is the only appropriate solution.

### 3. Independent Travel Training

A number of comments: it is not very accessible; it is not advertised. It will need to be publicised if it is to be enhanced. How does it work?

Answer: explained it is an assessment of the young person to see if travel training is appropriate for them and also an assessment of the route to and from school. The amount of time it takes for a young person to complete a travel training programme varies. It is often a good idea to have 'top up' sessions. Travel training is not only about getting onto public transport: moving from a solo taxi to getting one of the buses running to the special schools is progress. Yes, agreed, Merton's current scheme is not well advertised.

Comment: JD – son has been a recipient of travel training. Route from home to Raynes Park involves two buses and crossing a road. R (one of Merton Mencap's travel trainers) is "wonderful". But the training was only for the journey to the college, and that is not enough. He has had PA support for other journeys. But the travel training on its own was not enough. At 18, the travel training in Adult Social Care is not just for one journey.

Answer: Yes, travel training could well be part of a package not just on its own. Some authorities provide travel buddies to accompany the student on public transport. Point about needing to be flexible noted.

Comment (SW): Age threshold - in Merton it is available for young people aged 14 or over. That is too restrictive.

Answer: Noted. In other authorities, it tends to be made available from the age of 11 upwards. A few offer it for the Year 6 to Year 7 transition (if that involves a change of school) but that might be too big an ask of the young person.

#### 4. Personal Travel Budgets

Comments: that the issue of the actual amount provided under the budget scheme doesn't come anyway near the cost of commissioning a taxi.

Reservations over PTBs – it's a big ask for parents over such a timespan.

Answer: the council has to consult with parents/carers over PTABs (and ITT) where the pupil is aged 5-16. It can't force them to take them and they can hand them back if it's not working.

#### 5. Charging

Recognises it as a possibility, but it doesn't sit comfortably with the Carers' strategy and the availability of free travel within Adults for post 18 year olds. Issues of fairness over charging.

Answer: Charging (or 'parental contributions') are quite rare in London, but not outside. A couple of years ago all but two councils in the south east of England were charging for post 16 travel. In London, some councils charge about £400 a year; outside it is usually higher – say £600-700 a year, with a charge at half rate for students from low income families. It is only a modest contribution to the costs of organised transport. (Point about providing organised transport for post 19 adult learners 'free of charge' [where the council thinks it is necessary] noted. Nearly Kingston and Richmond both seem to do travel budgets and cash payments/re-imbursments as their main offer post 16.

#### 6. Placements

Most children who are non-SEN go to local schools. It is often too far for special needs pupils and students. Wider issue over choice of schools and where children are placed.

Answer: Merton strategy to increase the amount of places locally, local school capacity. Recognise that out of borough and residential provision may not be best meeting the child's needs. There are local expansions and a potential new secondary school plus ARPs- but a new secondary school can be 3 years' away.

#### 7. Severity of need

It is one of the options for discretionary travel. How do you define severe need?

Answer: all award of travel is based on an assessment of needs and the test of whether a young person is able to walk at all or use public transport to get to school. Some council say they restrict support to only those with the greatest needs/ most severe forms of disability. 'Exceptional circumstances' can mean not being able to use public transport at all and not having any family support to and from school or college.

#### 8. Budgets and expenditure

Question: is there sufficient money?

Answer: the expenditure has been increasing, but budgets have grown in line with expenditure. It is the same in every authority in the country who provide home to school travel. Numbers have increased, numbers with SEN and numbers with more severe forms of SEN have increased. Council are required by law to provide free home to school travel for 5-16 year olds if they qualify. But, to put it into context, in Merton around only 30% of pupils with EHCPs use organised transport (and you don't need an EHCP to qualify for assisted transport).

#### 9. Earlier years

Comment: need to consider the effect [of potential changes to post 16] on those with children in Years 4, 5 and 6 and parents considering how they will get to school.

Answer: schools consulted and parents with children on organised transport to all settings sent information about the consultation.

## Appendix 2 – Consultation meetings

Kids First meeting 2, 14 December 2021 18.30

Cllr. Eleanor Stringer, Tom Procter, Philip Wells

Bridget Creasey

Tuhina Shaikh (Merton Mencap), plus 5/6 parents

Cllr Stringer: policies not reviewed for a while. Want to work with schools, pupils and parents. Look for more efficient delivery. Keen to get people's views.

Presentation

1. Comment: decisions are already made. This is just to save money; the usual cuts. Should be selling the service. It should be sold to the 19-25 year olds.

Answer: we are not here to take away from those who need it. There is some support for 19-25 year olds with an EHCP, via Adult Services.

We know from Cricket Green that some other authorities are not supporting some post 16 students, who are not attending as a result. There is some element of reducing costs. But we have a responsibility to ensure that those who are entitled to travel assistance get to schools.

2. Question on the % of SEN children educated out of borough- the best schools are out of borough, more than 3.5 miles away.

Answer: we are increasing the number of special school places locally – a new 80 place provision, expansions of both major special schools and more to come.

3. What is the travel offer/what do you mean?

Answer: children of statutory school age (5-16) are entitled to free home school travel if they qualify under law and policy. People who are applying to Merton for travel assistance are doing so because they feel their children cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school because of their SEN or disability or because they cannot use public transport. Each application is assessed individually. If an offer of travel is made, it is likely to be a seat on one of the buses or a place in a minibus or taxi. But, increasingly council first offer will be – for independent travel training or a personal travel budget.

4. Personal Travel Budgets.

Comment: these were introduced a few years ago, but they have not been promoted. It's the same with Independent Travel Training. School are not flexible which doesn't help either.

Answer: agree, it's not clear how it works.

5. Pick up points

Q: what happened with the pick-up points for Cricket Green? It was to be reviewed.

A: Agreed. It will be looked at. Responsibilities for home to school travel have shifted within Children & Young People.

## 6. Personal Travel Budgets

Comment: as someone who has a PTAB, it is a nightmare to get new drivers. There is a stress on parents. The Council has the purchasing power. Would it be better value for money to use a council contractor?

Ans.: Agreed it is challenging at the moment. We are accepting some bids that are poor value for money because there is little choice. But you should be able to get it cheaper yourself because of the requirements the council puts on contractors. Also, if a PTAB is not working for you (for statutory school age), you can hand it back.

Comment: the mileage rate is poor compared with the rate for taxis

Answer: point taken.

The admin needed for PTABs can be very complicated. Commissioning your own taxi via a PTAB is 'tricky'.

Ans.: please let us know about your experiences; and let us know if we can make it simpler (use the text boxes in the questionnaire).

## 7. Assessments

How are assessments carried out / how would they be in a new system?

Answer: post 16 students going to college need to apply and they are re-assessed. If there is a potential for travel training, then the travel trained carries out what is essentially a risk assessment – looking both the capability of the individual (road-sense, awareness of danger etc.) and the nature of the journey.

## 8. Independent Travel training (ITT)

Comments: there's not much advertising for ITT. Some can't get it under the Council's scheme. Other go for the BBC funded scheme, but that is limited. R registered more than two years ago. ITT is only for a specific route.

Answer: the benefits of ITT are considerable for everyone involved. There is scope for further investment? There are clearly issues of demand in relation to supply and the scope of the service – should it include refreshers?

## 9. Placements

Comment: it's easier to send children out of the borough because there are not enough spaces within the borough.

Answer: yes a high proportion are sent to independent schools. But you wouldn't expect a borough like Merton to have all the specialist places it needs.

## 10. School reviews

Q: will you be reviewing transport school by school.

Ans.: yes, we do that. Examples – summer review of the white buses led to big improvement in occupancy rates. Now, about 70% of seats are occupied. Two years ago, it was about 55%.

Review of transport and travel into one of the colleges currently underway.

#### 11. The survey/consultation

Comment: the questionnaire is biased, forcing people into ranking preferences which misrepresents their views and which leads to one outcome.

Answer: no, the questionnaire is seeking opinions on a number of propositions. Asking people to rank a set of statements is just one way of getting a points of view on a specific issue. The questionnaire allows for written comments to be made- and a lot have been made already. The questionnaire is just one consultation method too- meetings such as this and in schools. It is not possible to extend the consultation period beyond 5 January as we are to report to members in February. Merton Mencap offered to forward any further comments to the Council.

#### 12. Other points

- Can Merton children share with children on other boroughs' transport? – Yes, it happens now in a few cases, but it could be done more;
- Parents – it would be good to speak to others about ITT via a forum for sharing information;
- There can be an increase in the number of vulnerable children (who need transport) at a time of Covid. Agreed.
- Comment on accessibility of home to school service, where to go to and the information that is published could be improved, particularly in languages other than English. Agreed.

## **School travel consultation**

**Cricket Green school** 13.00 Tuesday 7 December 2021

Celia Dawson, Headteacher; 2 groups of students

Bridget Creasey, Tom Procter, Philip Wells

### **Profile:**

6 buses costing £455,346

Carrying 68 pupils at an average cost of £6,696.26

18 children on taxis, of which 4 are solos

Costing £188,363.48, an average of £10,464.64

Total: 86 pupils at a cost of £643,709.48

Average: £7,484.99 a year.

### **Discussion with Headteacher**

#### Costs/numbers

Commented on Cricket Green's share of the costs of home to school travel. Only Perseid (just under £1 million) is higher.

Relates it to 'safety valve' discussions where they are told they have to cut costs in Merton, while they (the schools) point to the costs to the Council of placements in private special schools.

With 230 on roll, 86 are transported by Merton and a further 25 on taxis and minibuses from out of borough. That means that only around half the pupils are on organised transport to the school. That proportion has reduced over the years. Now there are 20 taxis, 7 minibuses, then parents transporting, some pupils are on public transport, some walking. 33 independent travellers, 12 as a result of travel training.

5 out of the 6 Merton bus routes have pick up points too.

Flexibility of offer – example of a pupil transferred from bus to taxi as she could not cope with the bus; and scope to move 2 out of 3 on solo taxis to a shared taxi.

#### Travel training

33 independent travellers, 12 as a result of ITT. Referrals are in for three more, though none of these are on transport currently.

Could they increase the numbers with ITT? Ans. There are 3 Year 11 and 6<sup>th</sup> form students who have the potential to be travel trained. 9 or 10 on the minibuses and 2 on taxis are earmarked for training. That's about 15 or the rough equivalent of a full bus load (a theoretical potential saving of £76,000- a bus; or £112,000 - 15 \* the average cost) though practically, that is not likely to be achieved.

The school work with Mencap. The life skills programme includes travel and transport. Staff become aware of young people's potential. It comes up at annual review. The kids themselves bring it up.

The current lower age threshold for ITT is 14- should that be lowered?

Answer: they are less aware of it at Year 7. We would do it from Year 8 upwards. It's not just about knowing your route; it is also about the unforeseen: what to do if there is a problem, who to ask, what if there is a change to the type of bus (a single rather than a double decker); how to keep safe, recognising their vulnerabilities.

Barriers:

- Parental support varies; there is some parental anxiety;
- Flexibility: when being trained, they leave school early at the end of the day to get ahead of the traffic. That can be a problem, especially with secondary schools.

Blockages:

- Lockdown restrictions, but easing
- Wandsworth put a taxi back on for one pupil
- One ex-student has a buddy to travel from Morden to Merton College, care of Mencap.

Merton doesn't have a buddy scheme. Can be difficult to implement, but worth considering as part of a travel package. Could not expect school based staff such as teaching assistants to do this at the beginning and the end of the school day because of their work commitments in school.

'Refreshers' do and should happen. Travel training is important in relation to employment opportunities. Putting money in there makes other things possible for the young person/adult if they get into employment. They are not on benefits and no longer have an EHCP. Joined up work on this with Adult Services.

School happy to work with home to school travel team to look at the scope to invest more in ITT. To do an exercise with the school to develop and cost a proposal.

#### Consultation proposals on discretionary provision

Views: The least able and most vulnerable students stay on into the school's sixth form.

Their age is immaterial. We would struggle with the idea that parents have to provide for 16-19 year olds.

The more able and the less vulnerable go to college. They may get travel training.

Of the 34 sixth formers, 10 are on transport – 9 on the buses, 1 in a taxi. None are ready for travel training.

What is meant by 'restricting provision to the most significant special needs'? What is meant by 'most significant'?

Wandsworth have just cut the transport for one student; others' support is threatened. The effect is that they have stopped attending the school's sixth form.

[Wandsworth have a 'most significant/ severe needs' policy].



## Sessions with students

2 x 15 minute session with Cricket Green students led by the headteacher:

1. Those travelling by taxi, bus, walking or with parents – 7 pupils
  2. Independent travellers- 4 pupils
- 
1. On transport/walking
    - L is on a minibus – “I don’t like it. I want to be by myself”. Would prefer to be in a car or on a (public service) bus. There are different ages on the school bus. Some are noisy. I get picked up from the house
    - K is on a minibus .There are quite a few picked up after him. The journey time is from 8.00 am to 8.40 am: “I don’t mind”. It’s a bit cramped inside (K is tall) but “I have got leg room”. The escort and driver are “ok”.
    - A is on a minibus. “It’s noisy”. I go to a pick up point by myself. I’m ok crossing the road. I go to mum’s work after school. It’s “all right”. I would like to be independent. The escort and driver are “ok”.
    - A & B – 2 girls walk. It takes 15 minutes. They would like the chance to travel train (Years 9 and 10).
    - K & O – both in a shared taxi. O was upset when she was on the bus. She is now in a taxi. She is picked up from home. The escort is “lovely”.
  2. Independent travellers
    - “ I’m so happy to be independent because it is an amazing experience”
    - “ I leave here , walk and get the 201 or 118..”
    - “When I go home, I go to the bus stop, wait and go home. I press the bell and walk up to my house”.
    - “ I always feel safe.” If there was a problem, I would talk to the driver or use my phone.
    - A – travelled trained: Radek got him out of class, walked the route, took him in the car and waited for him. He checked he crossed the road. (What if it’s crowded?) He keeps his phone hidden. He enjoys his independence. Sometimes his dad drops him off and, on other routes, it is safer to go with his dad. Hopes to go to Merton College.
    - Aa- “Of course!” Started with walking to the childminder’s. Then taking the bus – the 118. She lets herself into the house.
    - E & M – travel together to Morden on the 201 or 118. (What was it like at first?). “A bit scary. But it’s not scary now. There’s a bit of a walk. But everything is ok”. Just ignore them if someone says something. Talk to the bus driver.

## **School travel consultation**

**Raynes Park ARP** 12 December 2021, 1400.

Tom Procter, Philip Wells

Samantha Kuti (Head of Inclusion), Nicki Atkinson (deputy in Access ARP)  
Zoe Boulton (assistant SENCo for SEN Dept.), Tanya Sarbutts (Admin for ARP)

8 students.

### **Numbers**

1 bus costing £76,077

Carrying 10 pupils at an average cost of £7,607.70

6 pupils on taxis, of which 1 is solo

Costing £54,990.00, an average of £9,165.00.

Total cost £131,067, average cost of £8,191.69.

In addition there is a student on PTA Cost of £2,028 (who is currently travel training; a sibling is also being transported by parents to the same school, who has an EHCP also and has just applied for PTA).

25 in the ARP; 48 in SEND. 1100 on roll.

### **Notes of conversations with 8 pupils:**

1 on Merton bus, 2 walked (1 who did this despite not being travel trained as parent couldn't transport her and turned down for assistance as 'under mileage', 1 single on a taxi, 3 caught TfL buses (1 of which was previously on a Merton bus and had received travel training), and 1 where parent drove them.

Pupil on taxi liked it as it was quieter – can travel on a bus but it is a bit noisy. The pupil on the Merton bus also liked it as it was quieter.

The pupil on the TfL bus that had transferred from a Merton bus said he liked it as it was more flexible as he could get into school earlier which he preferred, he travels from the other side of Mitcham so it takes a long time to get in with a lot of traffic and requires 3 buses.

### **Session with 4 staff**

- 1 pupil to be travel trained – E – currently ½ hour walk. Been doing this for a year. Have applied for ITT – long waiting list. E was refused transport "because of distance". Yet, she has vulnerabilities. And a long time waiting for ITT.
- High level of support provided in an ARP. Parents can be against ITT. The school encourage parents as well as young people. Part of annual review.
- Massive change from primary to secondary. ITT not appropriate for Y6/Y7 transition. Better model to have organised transport in Year 7 – essential - but with expectation that from Year 8 onwards, ITT will be offered. Need to recognise the stress some children experience
- The school has about 8 children on the waiting list for travel training; school would strongly support more resources for this. They go direct to Mencap for ITT. Their priority list is age based

- Cars – 5-6 coming in, bus, taxis at the back of the school; difficult to manage. Not the space to handle; “a shock” when transports are coming in
- Questioned why there are so many taxis – none need solo (we said would check as it may be because they are coming from different directions, bus is full, and second bus was more efficiently utilised elsewhere)
- We need a note out to schools on who to contact on transport – they are confused over who does what and would ideally like a single point of contact
- Visiting the school on an annual basis would be helpful to go through transport needs. It would also be helpful to go through the transport list now to review needs. The school have little to do with the transport arrangements. They contact the borough. But would be willing to work with Bridget to plan it.
- Students need to leave at 3 pm for transport. That means they miss out on out of school events (an example of how ITT and PTABs are more inclusive). Independent travel has the advantage of being less restrictive as pupils can take part in after school enrichment activities.
- The school were of the view that travel assistance in Year 7 was important for the transition to secondary school but travel support should follow with a view to independent travel starting from year 8, and definitely as a pupils gets into KS4; essential for independence. All their children should be independent by Year 11 for life. Need to develop parental expectations. Not a problem for pupils to leave the site early if they are being travel trained.
- ‘So may teething problems’ at the beginning of term. Need for clearer protocols and consistency of communication. Bus and taxi companies should inform the school if they are late in the afternoon. Has been a case of a taxi being 30 minutes late and school not knowing and needing to phone Merton
- Their bus driver can be rather abrupt expecting the bus to leave within 5 minutes (“7 minutes at most”) from 3 o’clock which can put Raynes Park staff under pressure even though it is not their fault that students can be delayed in class
- Some (taxi) staff – need for more autism awareness/training.

## School travel consultation

Perseid Upper School 9 December 2021, 1100.

Bridget Creasey, Tom Procter, Philip Wells

Louise Tidey and 2 other staff members

4 students – the School's Council.

How do you get to school? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

1. Hn

- Gets the white bus (Council bus) from Mitcham. *How long?* "It depends. Sometimes it's early, sometimes late". "I like it". *Why?* It's exciting. But it's also relaxing. Sometimes I can sleep. But it's noisy.
- I go on school trips. I go to sleep too.

2. Aj

- Comes by car, with his family. Travels with other family members, nephews, who go to a different school. "It's not too noisy". There's the noise of the tyres. It takes about 15 minutes. It is quite close by car. He used to walk to school.
- Sometimes (when the car is not available) he goes on the bus with his sister and brother-in-law. The number 154 (stops near the school). It is really busy on a school day. There's a lot of students for different schools.

3. Al

- Says he has had a taxi with just the driver. But now he shares with one other. He is picked up second. Travel from Mitcham. It seems to take a long time. "I like the taxi. I always come to school on the taxi". "The taxi is better. It's good". *Why?* "Because I get picked up".

4. Ha

- Comes on a taxi by himself, sometimes shares with others. Lives in Mitcham with mum and dad and brother and sisters. He used to get a taxi with one of his friends. Now it is a solo taxi with Ha, the driver and an escort. Would like to get to school on the bus. *Why?* "I like buses ...I like the white buses. It's fun on the bus with friends."
- His parents take the bus and train to work and take others to school- on the train. He goes on the train for school trips.

## School travel consultation

Travel Team session 11.00 Wednesday 1 December 2021

### 1. Under 5s

Under 5s who get transport are quite needy. Year R and pre-reception, about 4 or 5 a year who are an exceptionally needy cohort. The younger they are and the greater the need, the more costly they are.

### 2. Supply and Demand

'Transport' is becoming more costly because of a lack of transport across the country. There is a lack of private hire companies. There is little or no competition. We have re-tendered routes to try to get more bids.

Things are not settling down with applications- there are another 10 just now. There was an increase of 75 between July and the end of October. It is plus 100 by now. We are getting 2,3,5 in a week.

Kids are 'off the scale with behaviour'. It rolls over to us in Transport. It has got worse post-Covid. Kids have been out of school and don't like change. There's a whole host of things to deal with – and more kids having to go solo because they won't share.

ASD and children with challenging behaviour. There is push back from schools and parents don't help. Crews won't transport because of behaviours. There's an impact from schools but there are cost implications.

### 3. Personal Travel Budgets (PTABs)

*Should these be encouraged?* Yes, if it is beneficial and cost effective. A lot of parents do not want it. They require capacity and will power to make them work.

Problems with Merton's scheme is that – the mileage rate is not sufficient and also how it is administered. The card is loaded to spend on petrol and transport related costs. But if they don't spend it, then it is recouped.

There is nothing published on how the scheme is supposed to work.

Payments for taxis are more complicated – we give them the money to pay taxi firms at £3.50 per mile. But, question over checking.

1 PA is paid via a PTAB- the 'odd one' where the parents get paid as a PA because of the behaviours of the pupil

### 4. Policies

Expectations have increased. Parents definitely know their rights and will quote the policy. Parents specify the needs of the child and also the mode of transport. Some schools agree. A few push back. Means a shift from public to organised transport.

We need clarity on policy.

### 5. Independent Travel Training

SEN would pass on referral from her own list. School also referring where they think it is appropriate. Of the information provided, some are those who have been travel trained using the BBC Children in Need grant to Merton Mencap. Only 1 young person on organised taxis is being travel trained. Probably about 4 or 5 on the waiting list. There will be others by the end of term.

If there is a waiting list, then the priority should be those on organised transport to help get costs down.

Public Health Commissioning are extending Merton Mencap's contract by exception and making the specification clearer. Merton Mencap have been asked about the implications of reducing the lower age threshold from 14 to 11 years.

Discussion with schools – Cricket Green, Raynes Park where pupils are not at the most extreme end of need. Also, Rutlish students/Cheam High?

Need to consider 45 minute travel time.

Potential to have something in-house (pros and cons). Can also buy from other authorities, particularly Croydon.

Point made that the two principal offers of travel (ITT and PTABs) are not actually controlled or managed directly by the home to school travel/commissioning team.

#### 6. Passenger Assistants

Nothing written down. Always for 8 and below. Relate to particular needs. Just look at holistically.

#### 7. Post 16 travel

Level of support seems to depend on the costs. Can include add-ons to make tube travel free.

Bespoke travel solutions for individual students to fit in with their timetables. Some parents 'won't put up with' anything else.

Not clear why we are supporting students to go to out of borough colleges, when, Merton College is nearer. NESCOL may be easier to get into? We need to know more about the post 16 local offer of college course and the respective entry requirements. NESCOL is a long way. We need clarity on learning needs and choice of course and the suitability of the provision within the borough.

A lot can be travel trained.

#### 8. Adult Services

There's nothing in the post 16 policy for Adult learners – those starting a course after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Adult Services will do individual assessments.

A very small number stay on beyond the age of 19: it's not so much that they take a long time to complete a course; they transfer to a new one and may still get travel.

Scope for combined policy with Adult Services.