

REPORT TO: Health Halton Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 10th June 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health & Community
SUBJECT: Review of Travel Policy & Procedure
WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the proposed changes to the Travel Policy & Procedure for the Health & Community Directorate.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That Members note and comment upon the appended Policy and Procedure.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In February 2007, the Directorate consulted widely on proposals for changes to charges for social care services. All service users/carers were sent a copy of a survey form to complete and return and eight open forums were held in locations across the Borough so that people could come and talk to officers about the proposals and make their views known. The results of the survey were considered on charging for social care services and recommendations for changes to charges for social care services were made including the introduction of a charge for transport provision. Of those surveyed, 74% who thought that charges should be made for transport services, indicated that they thought it was reasonable to ask people to pay £1.00 a trip up to a maximum of £4.00 a day.

3.2 Following the consultation, for the first time, a charge of 50 pence a trip with a maximum charge of £2 per day/ £8 per week was introduced in 2007.

3.3 As a consequence of introducing charges for transport it was necessary to review the Travel Policy, Procedure and Practice to ensure that:

- The independence of service users was encouraged by utilising Travel Trainers and by encouraging those eligible for concessionary travel passes and mobility benefits to apply for them.
- Staff and managers were clear about the eligibility criteria to use when assessing people for transport services.
- Staff and managers were briefed on the introduction of charges for local authority provided transport including fleet vehicles, taxis and volunteer driver transport.

3.4 A parallel review of operational practice in 2007 also revealed high usage of sole occupancy contracts. The annual cost of sole occupancy contracts at the time was £76,375 for 19 in borough and 5 out-of-borough services. As a

consequence of these high costs, criteria were developed (Appendix 1) to ensure that a Panel subjected the costs of sole occupancy transport to approval as part of the care assessment process.

- 3.5 Appendix 2 shows the current and proposed charges for Transport by other Local Authorities in the North West. Halton's charges register as significantly cheaper than its neighbours who have similar levels of deprivation but who charge more than £1 per trip.
- 3.6 Appendix 3 shows how satisfaction with transport services has improved during 2007/8. Three surveys conducted in May and August 2007 and March 2008 by Transport Co-ordination show increased and maintained transport service user satisfaction ratings. There has been a significant capital investment in the Council fleet in 2007/8.
- 3.7 Currently on average 520 service users receive transport services from Transport Coordination each month. The service continues to change and expand due to the redesign of the provision of day services, which has led to wider dispersal of daytime activities including gardening, catering, crafts and drama across 14 centres.
- 3.8 Given increased transport usage per day with day centre modernisation, demonstrable improvements in service quality, previous consultation responses and the need to cover a greater proportion of the service/petrol costs and assumed budgetary savings targets; increases to transport charges were approved by full Council on 5th March 2008 and Executive Board Sub Committee on 20th March 2008. Executive Board Sub Committee Members also approved amendment to the maximum weekly charge as follows:
 - To charge a maximum weekly charge of £10.00 to those not in receipt of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance
 - To charge a maximum weekly charge of 50% of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance £46.75 per week for 2008/9 namely £23.00 per week to those in receipt of it.
- 3.9 It is proposed that the Healthy Halton PPB note and comment upon changes to this policy in the following areas:
 - Promote a range of travel options available to adults over the age of 18 who access social care services
 - with an update on the concessionary travel pass which can now be used nationwide,
 - information on the Blue Badge Scheme
 - Approves the introduction of a criteria for the single occupancy use of taxis or other LA provided transport
 - Place emphasis on reducing air pollution and encourage the use of sustainable resources by promoting the use of public transport.
 - An Eligibility Quick Practice Guide as Appendix 1 to this report, which professionals may detach and take with them on visits.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Revisions to the Draft Transport Policy, Procedure and Practice have been amended in line with 3.9 above, including Appendix 3 to the attached policy – an eligibility quick practice guide including the criteria for single occupancy vehicles, as this represents a policy change.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

To provide an effective transition for young people with disabilities.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

To provide transport facilities that meets the needs of those people in Halton in accessing services.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The proposal would promote a range of travel options available to people whom access services and promote and maintain the independence of people by encouraging and supporting independent travel, as well as managing financial resources effectively and ensuring value for money.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The proposal would maintain and develop the Local transport network, meeting the needs of residents in Halton.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 It is inevitable that a small number of service users, families and carers will not support increased charges for transport and there is a risk that some service users may refuse to pay. However, to date 99.9% of service users have paid the charge for transport. In instances where service users do not pay and accrue a debt, existing debt recovery processes are administered to recover the debt. However, every effort will be made to encourage service users to travel independently and to apply for benefits and concessionary bus passes they are entitled.

7.2 Legally, increases to charges can be justified if we can demonstrate that future provision needs to be more cost effective. The Local Government Act 2003 includes a general power for best value to charge for discretionary services i.e. those services that the authority has the power, but is not obliged, to provide. Guidance is issued under the power in section 93, which states charges are limited to cost recovery. The Department of Health's fairer Charging Policies for Home care and other Non- Residential Social Services Guidance, Sept 2003, state that where Councils charge for non-residential services, flat rate charges are acceptable.

8.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None associated with this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX 1

TRAVEL POLICY, PROCEDURE & PRACTICE

ELIGIBILITY QUICK PRACTICE GUIDE

Use of public transport to access services

For individuals who are able to travel independently or are able to be supported to travel independently, options such as the Travel Training initiative, public transport, use of concessionary travel passes and use of the Disability Living Allowance (Motability component) should be discussed with them.

Fleet transport / multiple occupancy of a vehicle

In order to use fleet transport or any other multiple occupancy vehicle provided under contract by the Council (including taxis and volunteer driver vehicles) the individual must be eligible to receive transport in accordance with Sections 1.4 and 3.1 of this Policy. To reiterate, the individual:

- Should be unable to travel independently.
- Does not have access to personal transport or lives with a carer/family member (ie, someone who is not paid to provide care) who has personal transport but is unable to transport them to/from the service due to employment or other caring commitments, illness or incapacity.
- Does not have a motability vehicle.
- Cannot gain access to other voluntary or private transport that is available.

Single occupancy

In addition to the indicators for transport funded by the Council above, to qualify for single occupancy of a taxi or any other vehicle provided under contract by the Council, the individual must have:

- A high level of challenging behaviours requiring a Level 2 risk assessment and a risk management plan to manage safety, which specifies why a single occupancy taxi/vehicle is necessary.

Important:

When an assessment or review is carried out for services, an assessment for transport services should be undertaken at the same time and presented to Panel. For single occupancy taxis/vehicles to be used, Panel must approve that the above criteria has been met. The Level 2 risk assessment must be supplied to Transport Co-ordination along with the Transport Request Form.

APPENDIX 2

Analysis of Separate Charges for Transport

As part of your local Charging Policy for non residential services do you make a separate flat rate (or other) charge for people using transport to day centres/ community based services
 If so what do you charge and when did you implement / intend to implement

Authority	Type of Charge	Charge one way £	Charge return £	Implementation Date	Comments
Blackburn	Flat rate	1.00	2.00		Proposal for Comm Transport Service to operate 7 days/week also to be charged at £1 per journey
Blackpool	Flat rate	0.60	1.20	1999	
Bury			3.10		No Flat Rate. Charge up to £3.10 per return journey based on assessment.
Halton		0.50		Apr-07	From Apr 07: 50p/trip up to a max of £2/day or £8/week. Proposal in Budget to increase charges in 2008/9.
Lancashire					No separate charge for transport to day centres. No immediate plans to charge in future.
Liverpool					No charge at present. Proposal to Members of £3 return flat rate for 2008/9.
Knowsley					No charge at present. Proposal to Members of £2 a day return trip 2008/9
Rochdale					No charge at present. Negotiations currently taking place re implementing flat rate charge in cycle of budget setting
Sefton					No charge at present.
St Helens	Flat rate	1.12	2.24	Oct-02	Paid regardless of financial assessment. Introduced when Fairer Charging was implemented
Tameside	Flat rate	1.30	2.60		If in receipt of another service, e.g. home care, the transport and attendance at day care is included in fairer charging assessment.

Warrington	Flat rate	1.50	3.00	Oct-06	Implemented along with revised non-res charging policy
Wirral	Flat rate	4.42	8.84		These charges apply to full cost clients - ie those above capital limit of £25K Clients below capital limit assessed against income as per fairer charging guidance

APPENDIX 3- TRANSPORT SATISFACTION SURVEYS

• Passenger Consultation on Transport - May 2007

As a result of recent customer surveys, we can report that positive results were received as follows:

- 92% happy overall with transport;
- 100% said that vehicles were suitable;
- 82% reported transport is punctual
- 96% said staff wear their ID badges
- 100% said that drivers / passenger assistants are courteous and helpful

Source: Survey form posted out to all current registered service users, 48% returned.

• Passenger Consultation on Transport - August 2007

Following recent consultation during pre-organised visits to centres (Bridgewater, Oak meadow, Day Services centres, Volunteer Driver passengers) a total of 74 passengers were surveyed with very positive results received as follows:

- 86.5% satisfied with transport, reporting good or very good;
- 86.4% said vehicles were suitable, reporting good or very good;
- 94.6% reported drivers are helpful, good or very good
- 83.7% say pick ups are convenient reporting good or very good
- 85.2% said transport is reliable, always or mostly on time
- 71.5% said transport is flexible
- 8% reported they would consider public transport if training was provided

• Passenger Consultation on Transport - March 2007

As a result of recent customer surveys, we can report that positive results were received as follows:

- 96.6% happy overall with transport;
- 97.6% said that vehicles were suitable;
- 89.0% reported transport is punctual
- 98.9% said staff wear their ID badges
- 98.9% said that drivers / passenger assistants are courteous and helpful
- 3.8% said if a free travel pass was provided they would be able to use public transport to/from day centre.
- 10.5% of service users responding said they would be interested in receiving information on independent travel training (90% responded to this question).

Source: Survey form posted out to all current registered service users, 58% returned.

• Improvements in Capital Assets - Council Fleet

The Council's fleet of seven fully accessible minibus vehicles has been replaced with new modern vehicles and at the same time the new 'Door to Door' branding has been used on all vehicles, from September 2007.

