

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee
DATE: 25th July 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health & Community
SUBJECT: Review of Travel Policy & Procedure relating to Social Care Services
WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek the Board's approval for the proposed changes to the Travel Policy & Procedure for the Health & Community Directorate.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

(1) The Board approves the changes outlined in section 3.5 of this report and the appended Policy & Procedure

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Satisfaction with transport services improved during 2007/08. Three surveys conducted by Transport Co-ordination in May and August 2007 and March 2008 show increased and maintained transport service user satisfaction ratings. There has been a significant capital investment in the Council fleet in 2007/8.

3.2 A review of operational practice in 2007 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.

3.3 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. The charge for a single journey increased from 50p to **£1.00**. Executive Board Sub Committee Members also approved amendment to the maximum weekly charge, **irrespective of the number of journeys undertaken**, 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

- 50% of the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (£46.75/week), ie **£23.00** per week to those in receipt of it.

3.4 On average, 520 service users currently receive transport services from Transport Co-ordination 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.

3.5 The Travel Policy and Procedure has been amended in the following areas to:-

- 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,
 - with information on the Blue Badge Scheme
- introduce 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.
- Include 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 3.5 above. The introduction of the eligibility quick practice guide including the criteria for single occupancy vehicles represents a policy change.

4.2 Healthy Halton PPB and Urban Renewal PPB support the revisions to the Travel Policy, Procedure and Practice and noted that a further report will be submitted to the November PPBs on the impact of charges. Urban Renewal PPB also noted the quality of the service being provided and the investment made in new vehicles.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

An effective transport service supports the independence of vulnerable children and young people.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Not applicable.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The proposal promotes a range of travel options available to 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 to.

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.