

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, People

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Education & Social Care

**SUBJECT:** Home to School Travel and Transport Policy

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report fulfils the requirement under the Department for Education issued Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (statutory guidance) in July 2014, and the requirements of the Education Act 1996 sections 508 and 509 and part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to ensure that the Council makes travel arrangements and provides free transport for eligible children. The proposed policy attached to this report fulfils that requirement.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Executive Board approve:**

- i) The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy (Statutory School Age) for implementation, with immediate effect.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Council already has in place a Home to School Travel and Transport Policy, which works well and is effective, and the Policy is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets statutory requirements.

3.2 Following a transport appeal in 2019, the appellant made a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2020, which the Local Government Ombudsman subsequently investigated. Whilst the Local Government Ombudsman confirmed to the complainant that the decision made by the Council's independent transport appeal panel in that case was correct and had followed the statutory and local process, it asked the Council to consider some recommendations which would further enhance the policy and assist parents and carers in their understanding of school admissions and eligibility to assistance with transport. It also recommended that, whilst it is not a statutory requirement to do so, parents/carers be allowed the opportunity to appeal in person, which is seen as good practice.

3.3 Currently appellants submit written documentation only for consideration by the appeal panel. The revised Policy incorporates the Ombudsman's recommendations and there are no changes to the eligibility criteria which are statutorily set.

3.4 In addition to the minor amendments in the Policy, officers in Transport Coordination are revising the guidance notes and application forms which provides enhanced information for parents and carers to support them with their application for assistance with transport.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Local Authority is required to provide assistance with transport to those pupils defined within the Education Act 1996 and The Education and Inspections Act 2006.

4.2 The Policy has been reviewed to reflect the recommendations made by the Local Government Ombudsman to help strengthen information contained within the policy, and to allow parents and carers the right to appeal in person to the independent appeal panel. The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy is aligned to the Council's School Admissions Policy.

4.3 The number of transport appeals each year is very low (3 appeals during 2018/19 and 2 appeals during 2019/20 academic years) which indicates the Policy works well, ensures that those who need and qualify for assistance receive it, and that it is applied appropriately.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None identified.

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

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy underpins the priorities within the Children & Young People's Plan in encouraging children to be healthy, by using sustainable modes of transport including walking and cycling to school. Any travel assistance provided by the Council is in place to ensure children can access school where they can enjoy and achieve, and make a positive contribution.

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

The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy underpins the

priorities within the Children & Young People's Plan in encouraging children to be healthy, by using sustainable modes of transport including walking and cycling to school. Any travel assistance provided by the Council is in place to ensure children can access school where they can enjoy and achieve, and make a positive contribution.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy underpins the priorities within the Children & Young People's Plan in encouraging children to be healthy, by using sustainable modes of transport including walking and cycling to school. Any travel assistance provided by the Council is in place to ensure children can access school where they can enjoy and achieve, and make a positive contribution.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. To assist parents/carers the Council has an independent Travel Training Scheme which teaches pupils and young people who need additional help or support to make journeys confidently and safely on their own using public transport. Walking routes are determined by officers in the Council and safe walking route risk assessments are undertaken if required.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The Home to School Travel and Transport Policy is in place to meet statutory requirements. There are no major risks associated with the publication of the Policy.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 This Policy reflects the diverse needs of children and young people in Halton in accessing appropriate educational provision. The Policy makes suitable travel arrangements for those children. Children from low income families are also offered extended rights to assisted transport in accordance with statutory requirements.

## **9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

The decision is required to fulfil the Council's statutory duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport and provide assistance with transport to eligible children and young people.

10.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

None.

11.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

With immediate effect following approval.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Education & Inspections Act 2006	People Directorate	<a href="mailto:Martin.West@halton.gov.uk">Martin.West@halton.gov.uk</a>
Department for Education Guidance on home to school travel and transport	People Directorate	<a href="mailto:Martin.West@halton.gov.uk">Martin.West@halton.gov.uk</a>