

Meeting: Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Board

Date: 18 November 2024

Wards affected: All

Report Title: Home to School Transport

When does the decision need to be implemented? n/a

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this update to board of progress being made following a review of Home to School Transport.

2. Background

2.1 The H2ST has increased expeditiously over several years, although cost reductions were agreed at the star chamber for the period 22/23 these were not realized nor was any action put in place to potentially meet the activity identified.

2.2 The significant cost pressures are detailed below but in essence the spend has increased by 104% from £2.146m in 18/19 to £4.378m in 23/24, whereas during this period the number of children in receipt has increased from 711 to 745. With a significant reduction during the period of Covid.

18/19 – Budget £1.915m	Spend £2.146m	Overspend £231k	Number of children 711.
19/20 - Budget £2.225m	Spend £2.316m	Overspend £91k	Number of children 656.
20/21 - Budget £2.435m	Spend £2.594m	Overspend £159k	Number of children 409.
21/22 - Budget £2.897m	Spend £3.208m	Overspend £311k	Number of children 823.
22/23 - Budget £3.240m	Spend £3.902m	Overspend £662k	Number of children 678.
23/24 - Budget £3.958m	Spend £4.378m	Overspend £420k	Number of children 642

There was an overspend of £420k at the end of the financial year 2023/24 and an overspend of £162k is forecast for 24/25, against a budget of £4.075m. This is lower than the previous year due a number of changes, including a focus on route optimisation and maximisation of shared transport where possible. Along with reviewing processes and nebulous practice that was in place.

A thorough review of provision is being undertaken and a number of key areas for improvement have been identified. These are summarised below and feed through to the activity plan and milestones section.

- Increase transport options, including use of minibuses, less use of single occupancy taxis and the promotion of independent travel.
- Route planning and route optimisation
- More robust check and control over contracts and payments
- More collaboration and integration with other CYP teams

Redesign of the service as part of the “one child’s” vision

3. Progress

3.1 To receive transport approval, parents complete an online application and processing timescales are monitored through a moderation panel.

3.2 The moderation panel oversees all applications and any changes to existing arrangements. This is chaired by the Divisional Director and all transport arrangements and associated costs are now agreed at panel. This means that no children are allocated to transport without transport options, route optimisation and a full understanding of cost being agreed by the Divisional Director.

3.3 The panel will also make decisions on proposed changes to existing provision of transport, including where appropriate the ceasing of transport. We are strengthening the panels oversight of requests.

3.4 There is an emphasis on transport staff to discuss the application with parents and they are asked to enter into a dialogue alternative methods of transport provision which includes,

- Directing parent to free bus transport
- The purchase of bikes
- Direct payments to families who are eligible.
- Personal budgets for children who are eligible.
- Bus passes for Parents and children

3.5 A travel trainer (TT) is now in post and is supporting young people with their independence and delivering cost avoidance. The travel training programme will include train the trainer in schools / early help teams to support young people gaining the confidence to use public transport, demonstrating road safety awareness and being able to travel by themselves without confusion or anxiety. This may not bring a saving but will be avoided cost.

3.6 It is envisaged that the TT will deliver 1 session per month for a maximum of 12 delegates who will be responsible for training young people within their setting. Travel Trainer to work with schools to keep a record of young people trained and their outcomes.

3.7 Some thought is being given to an in-house fleet, or commissioned fleet of transport for some schools and routes. This is still in the early stages of development but could bring in a reduction of £150k in 2025/2026

3.8 The Transport Team continue manual route optimisation which includes amalgamation of routes and reviewing use of escorts. Consider implementation of route optimisation software. Approximate cost of £30,000 would need to be considered alongside a service structure review if manual tasks can be made automatic.

3.9 The plan is to move the invoice and financial oversight to the placement team in order that all of the funding streams have a clear line of sight of the DCS. This may not produce cost reductions but will provide more robust assurances and efficiencies.

3.10 A review of Post 16 transport is planned, which will look at bringing Torbay Post 16 offer in line with some other Local Authorities.

4. Recommendation(s)

4.1. The members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board note the contents of this report, and the progress made to date.

4.2. That members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board continue their oversight of the Home to School Transport improvement work.