

Proposed post 16 provision of travel assistance for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan and/or disabilities in education or training.

Draft consultation report: February 2019



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report brings together Croydon council's consultation findings on the proposed changes to the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy together with recommendations.

With grateful thanks to all involved in supporting the delivery of the consultation and to all those who actively took part in the process contributing valuable views.

The consultation process started on the 3rd December 2018 and ran live until the 31 January 2019. The consultation sought from parents/carers, young people and other agencies and stakeholders all of who offered important views and feedback.

The consultation was extensively promoted through a number of channels. This included direct contact with young people, families and stakeholders through focus groups. There was online availability of consultation documents including surveys available through the Local Offer on Get Involved. All documents were also available in Easy Read. All information about the consultation was circulated widely. This included education settings, Youth Clubs, neighbouring local authorities, Transport for London and parent support groups. Social media for example Twitter and Facebook was also used to promote the consultation.

The consultation was on the proposal to award a personal transport budget to most eligible students who are not suitable for Independent Travel Training. The exception being for students with severe learning difficulties or complex physical/medical needs.

The draft policy is attached in [Appendix 1](#)

2. INTRODUCTION

This report is a supplement to a report to Croydon Council's Informal Cabinet. It gives additional information about our consultation on proposals to change our Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy for students aged 16 to 18. The outcomes of the consultation and resulting recommendations are detailed in this report and in the appendices.

The proposed changes to the Post-16 Travel assistance policy are intended to:

- Promote the choice and independence of young people in relation to travel and transport.
- Empower families to find their own lasting travel solutions.
- Remove reliance on council provided transport and promote increased use of public transport.

There were many benefits to the consultation. Meeting with parents and carers gave a greater understanding of the issues and difficulties faced by families around travel and transport. It is important that the council continues to work closely with parents, carers and schools in the coming years to provide the best possible service and value for money to support young people in accessing education and training. Seeking the views of young people with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) in Croydon was invaluable. They told us how much they enjoyed travelling independently but also shared their views about what worries them. It was a pleasure to meet the students, parents and carers and their input into the consultation is greatly appreciated.

3.0 BACKGROUND - LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSIBILITY

The statutory responsibility for travel assistance for 16-19 year olds (who have started a course before their 19th birthday) rests with local authorities. Local authorities have a duty to prepare and publish an annual travel policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or otherwise that the authority considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

The 'sixth form age' duty applies to young people of sixth form age and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC plans) up to the age of 25 where they are continuing on a course they started before their 19th birthday.

The overall intention of the sixth form age transport duty is to ensure that:

- Learners of sixth form age are able to access the education and training of their choice; and
- If support for access is requested, this will be assessed and provided where necessary.

The local authority also has a duty under section 508G of the Education Act 1996 to prepare a transport policy statement setting out any transport or other arrangements that it proposes to make for that academic year in respect of adults aged under 25 with EHC plans. This must be published on or before the 31 May each year. The statement must include the details of

transport arrangements and the details of financial support in respect of reasonable travelling expenses that the local authority consider it necessary to facilitate access to education or training for learners of sixth form age for the following academic year. These arrangements could include:

- The availability of a concessionary fares scheme
- A bus pass or cash equivalent
- A bus pass or cash equivalent plus a companion pass or cash equivalent
- Independent travel training
- A fixed mileage allowance
- Provision of transport

The Education Act 1996 section 509AA duty applies to all local authorities in England in respect of arrangements for young people (over compulsory school age) aged 16-18 and those continuing learners up to the age of 25 with EHC plans who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday. Legislation gives local authorities the discretion to determine what transport and financial support are necessary to facilitate young people's attendance. The local authority must exercise its power to provide transport or financial support reasonably, taking into account all relevant matters.

Currently, Croydon Council offers travel assistance to young people of sixth form age with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and/or disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria. This support can include:

- Travel Assistance to the nearest suitable provider offering a course or programme which is designed specifically to meet their special needs, or;
- Travel to a provider further away if the EHCP states that the course they wish to attend is specifically designed for them; is essential for their job aspirations or is the most suitable placement for their needs.

The proposals in the consultation apply to the discretionary criteria and the post-16 policy for those students aged 16 to 18 who have special education needs or a disability in education or training. The Council will continue to meet its statutory duty for children aged 5 to 16.

Croydon's current Post-16 Policy is underpinned by the following general principles in line with Department for Education guidance:

- Students who are able to travel independently or use public transport will always be supported in the first instance to do this. 'Independent travel' training is the first option for those students who have the potential to travel independently.
- Students who have specific special needs will be offered the most independent and personally enabling solution to their situation.
- Croydon council will ensure that transport for eligible students is arranged when needed; after other potential options have been explored.
- Travel needs are reviewed regularly at least annually to ensure the arrangements are still appropriate to assessed needs.

The Council's aim is to support young people in developing independence skills for life. Where suitable the Council's first offer of travel assistance will be Independent Travel Training. Where Independent Travel Training is not appropriate, our preferred option will be to apply a personal transport budget to most learners aged 16 to 18 with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As detailed elsewhere, transport will continue to be provided for young people with the very highest needs.

Both these approaches will provide young people with the opportunity to travel more independently and can be more cost effective for the local authority, as the increased demand may not be met with our current offer in the available budget.

If Independent Travel Training is not appropriate, we are proposing that when a learner meets the criteria in the post-16 travel assistance policy, they will be offered the default position of a personal transport budget to make private travel arrangements to the nearest educational provision offering their chosen course of study.

4. METHODOLOGY:

We used a wide range of engagement methods to gather views on this consultation. We used a combination of both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (discussion groups) with various stakeholders.

4.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire was available mainly for completion online, with easy read and alternative versions available upon request. The questionnaire comprised of 16 questions as detailed below:

More about you:

Please tell what option below best represents you:

- A parent/carer of a young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- A school
- A social worker
- A student with special educational needs and/or disabilities who will enter post 16 education or training in the future
- A student with special educational needs and/or disabilities who is currently in post 16 education or training
- An organisation representing young people, families/carers or those with SEND needs (specify)
- Other

About our preferred option

Our aim is to support young people in developing independence skills for life. Where suitable we will support young people to travel independently to school/college through our personalised independent travel training programme. Where independent travel training is not appropriate our preferred option is to apply a personal transport budget to most learners aged 16 to 18 with special educational needs and/or disabilities. We recognise that there may be exceptional cases where a Personal Transport Budget is not appropriate, for example students with severe learning or physical difficulties.

Do you support our preferred option to apply personal transport budgets to post 16 students aged 16 to 18 with special educational in education/training?

Yes

No

Not sure

If you responded no/ not sure, tell us why?

To what extent do you agree/disagree that personal budgets will help to make Post-16 students more independent?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

How the proposals may affect you? We are keen to find out more about how our proposals may impact you, please answer the questions below to tell us more.

How, if at all, will the proposed introduction of personal transport budgets for travel (for most 16-18 year old impact or affect you?

(open ended)

If you do think there will be an impact what can we do to reduce the impact of what we are proposing?

(open ended)

Other options

We currently provide personalised Independent Travel Training to students who have the potential to travel independently to and from school/college after receiving travel training. However, we are open to alternative suggestions. We're keen to hear how you think we could

help students travel more independently. Let us know whether you have any suggestions or alternatives to independent travel training or personal budgets?

Are there any other options you think we should consider? Do you have any alternative suggestions to what we are proposing?

About you gender? About you age? About you disability? About you type of disability? About you nationality?

4.2 FOCUS GROUPS

A number of focus groups were held at various times and locations across the borough. We sought the views of parents and carers and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities. We also held focus groups with a number of practitioners. Please see table below.

We engaged with:

- 57 children and young people
- 45 parents
- 32 practitioners or professionals

A standard set of questions were used to form discussions:

1. Are the consultation documents/proposal clear?
2. What do you like about the proposed changes?
3. Is there anything about the proposal that worries/concerns you?
4. What impact do you think the proposed changed will have on you, your child/ren, family, school or wider community?
5. Is there anything missing from the draft policy that you feel should be included?

Date	Organisation	Audience	Number of attendees
5.12.18	CAMHS services SLAM	Professionals	15
7.12.18	Waddon Youth Centre	Parents	6
12.12.18	Bensham Manor	Parents	1
17.12.18	NHS Community Services Practitioners	Practitioners	13
20.12.18	Parents in Partnership	Parents	1
7.1.19	Waddon Youth Centre	Young People 18 +	18
9.1.19	Parents in Partnership	Parents inc. Advisor	4
10.1.19	Parents in Partnership	Parents	2
16.1.19	Autism Partnership Board	Parents, Councillors	9
16.1.19	Waddon Youth Club	Young People age 7-16	34
17.1.19	St Giles School	Parents	7

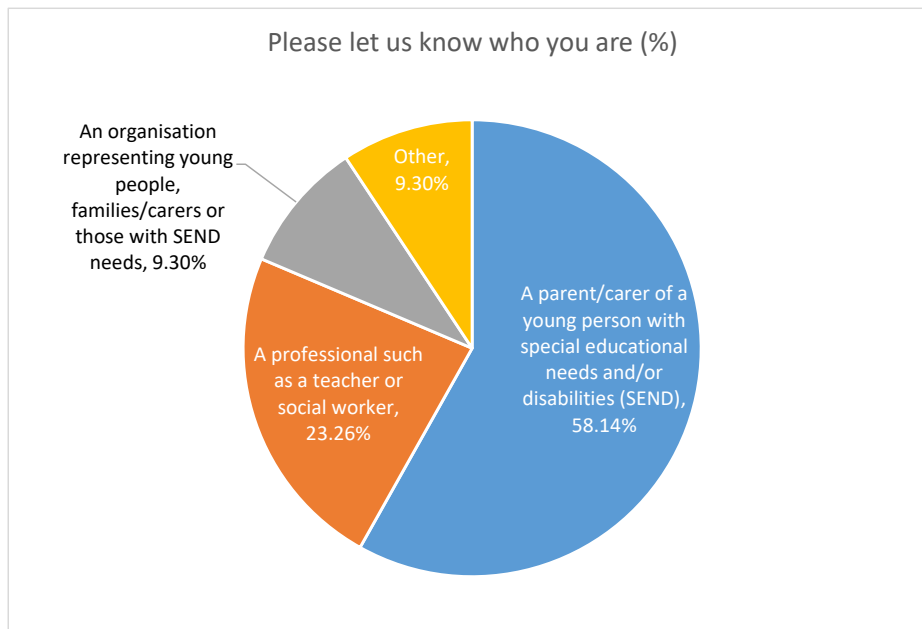
24.1.19	SENDIASS	parents	12
28.1.19	Beckmead School	Young People	5
	1 hr YP 1 hr parents	Parents	7
TOTAL			134

5 FINDINGS

42 surveys were completed in total. Although the number of respondents is low, the data received alongside findings from focus groups showed some themes had more direction of travel than others. We have provided numbers of respondents to the questions underneath each chart.

5.1 Presenting Questionnaire findings:

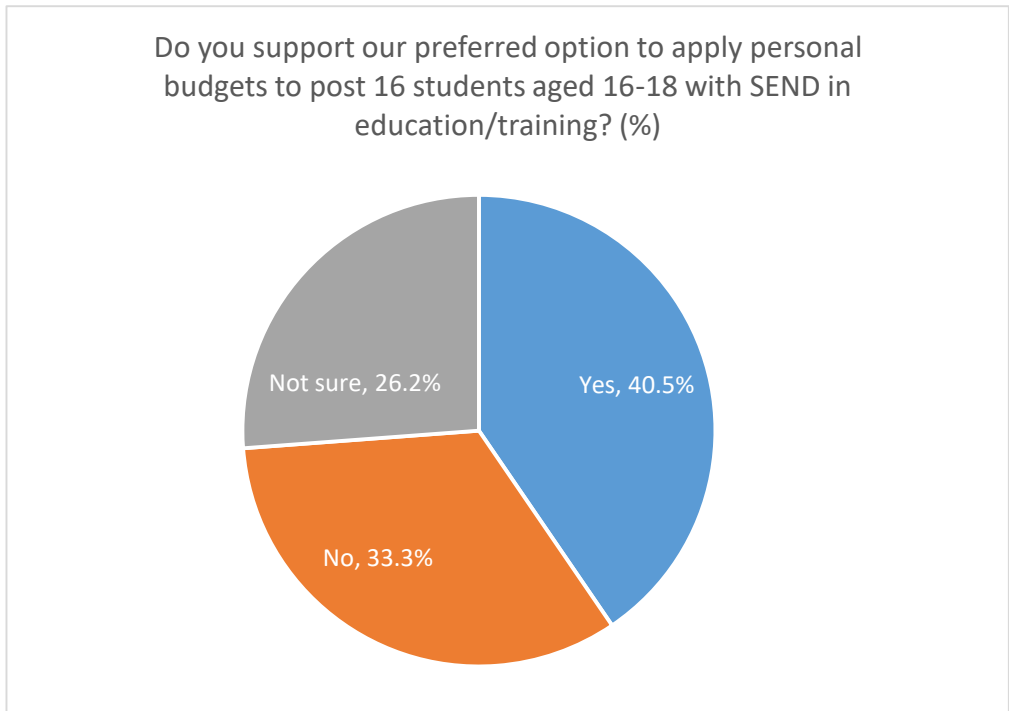
Over half of the respondents (58%) were parents/carers. 9% selected 'other as a response. This included a governor from a sixth form college with a large SEN population and a travel Assistance manager from a neighbouring authority.



Please let us know who you are to help us analyse	Count	%
A parent/carer of a young person with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)	25	58.14%
A professional such as a teacher or social worker	10	23.26%
An organisation representing young people, families/carers or those with SEND needs	4	9.30%
Other	4	9.30%
Grand Total	43	100.00%

Other- Please specify
A travel assistance manager from a neighbouring LA
Croydon council employee
Governor of post-16 college with a large number of SEND students
KS4 Transition Support Advisor

Over one third of respondees supported the preferred option to apply a personal transport budget to most 16-18 year old students with SEND in education/training where independent travel training is not appropriate. Exactly a third of respondents did not support this proposal, whilst just over a quarter (26%) were not sure.



Do you support our preferred option to apply personal budgets to post 16 students aged 16-18 with SEND in education/training?	Count	%
Yes	17	40.5%
No	14	33.3%
Not sure	11	26.2%
Grand Total	42	100.0%

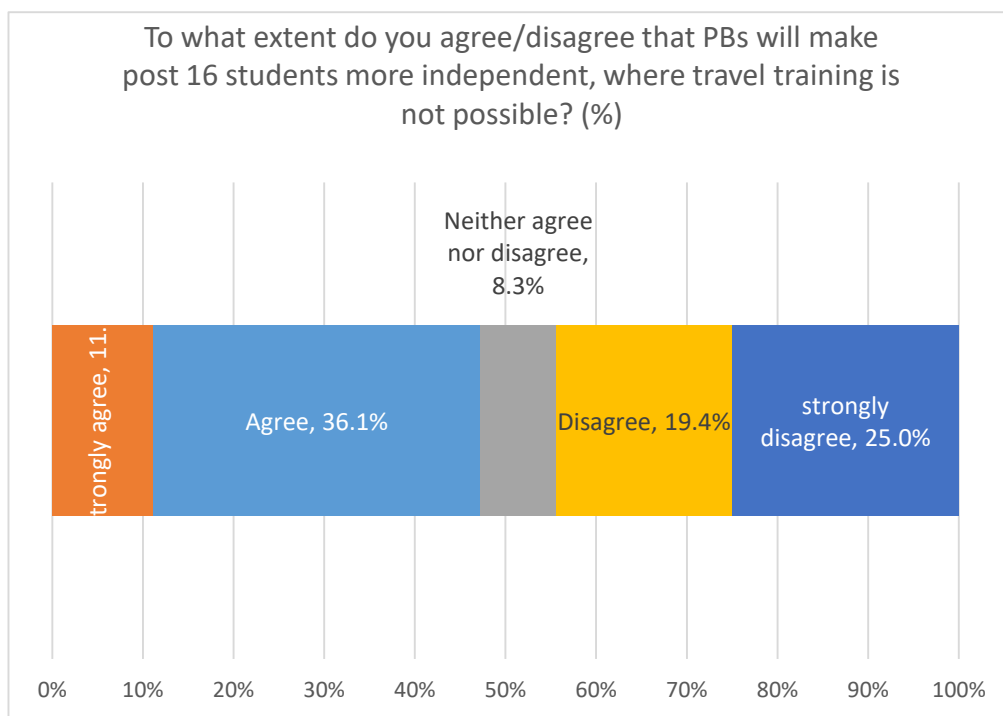
When we asked why respondents responded with 'no' or 'unsure' we found that some said:

“Parents of disabled children do not have the time to organise travel as well as care for their disabled child”

Others said:

“This depends highly on personal circumstances. I would want to see the amount suggested would suffice for this to be made an effective alternative option”

Nearly a half (47 %) of respondents agreed that a personal transport budget will make post-16 students more independent.



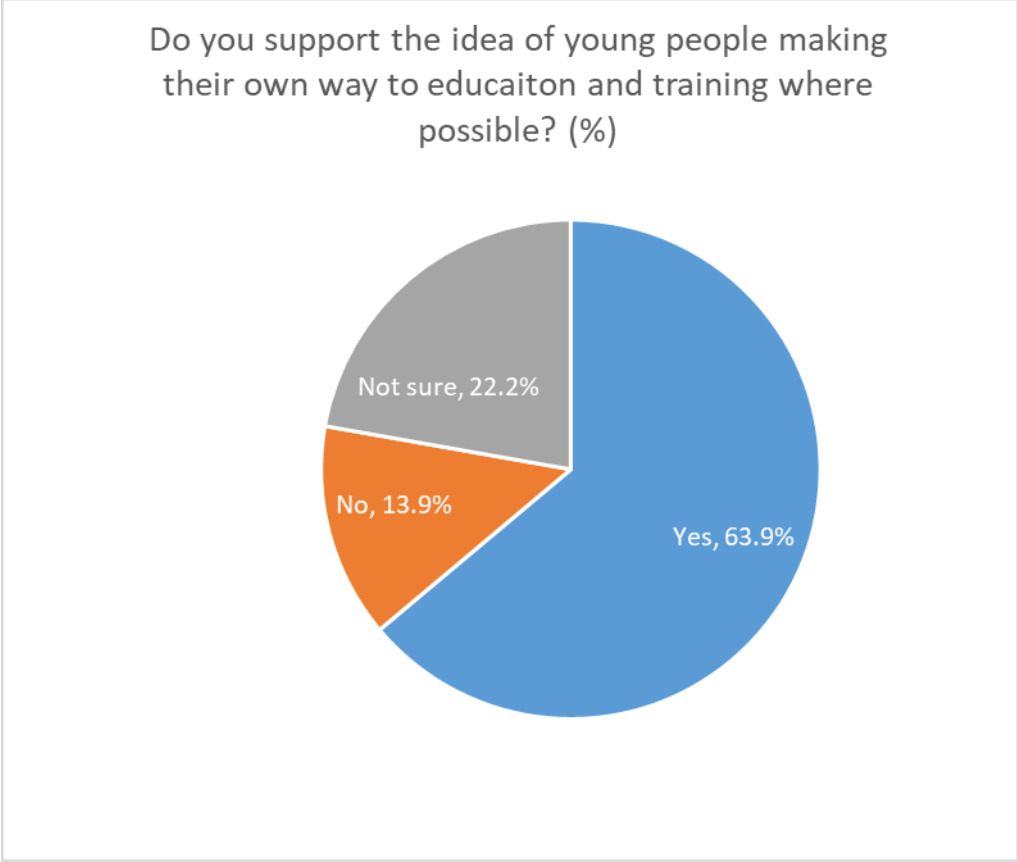
To what extent do you agree/disagree that personal budgets will make post 16 students more independent, where travel training is not possible?	Total	%
Strongly agree	4	11.1%
Agree	13	36.1%
Neither agree nor disagree	3	8.3%
Disagree	7	19.4%
Strongly disagree	9	25.0%
Grand Total	36	100.0%

Of those who either disagreed/strongly disagreed told us this was because:

“ Independence is only possible for those that can be travel trained”

“A personal budget is useless when it is so difficult to find a personal assistant, without that Burden to transport the child will fall upon the parents which would interfere with working etc,.....”

Nearly two thirds (64%) of the respondees supported the idea of young people making their own way to education and training where possible.



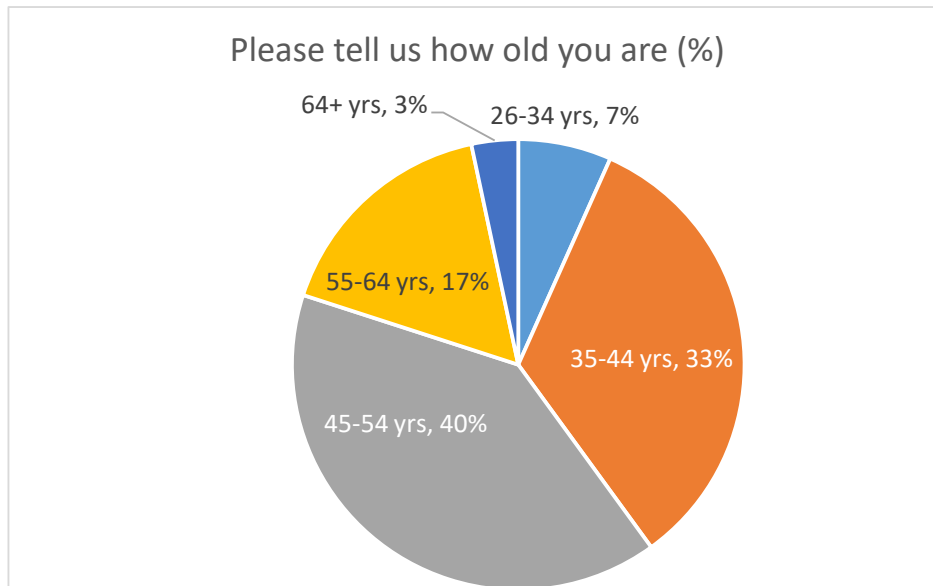
Those who disagreed with this said:

“I believe it will be difficult to 'judge' how an individual is able to travel independently. This will place additional stress and anxiety on individuals and their families. The Council needs to be clear on how this will be measured and implemented to ensure that all those who need support receive it.”

They also said:

“Our children are much more vulnerable to be travelling alone to school unless they are accompanied all the way”

We know that the majority of respondents were between 35 – 54 years old (73%) We understand that no one who answer this question was under the age of 25. However, the face to face engagement received a greater response to this consultation.



5.2 PRESENTING QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Emerging themes from the qualitative section of the survey include, the impact on the environment, the need for specialist transport, cost, vulnerability and anxiety. This is detailed further below: Full survey results can be found in [appendix 2](#)

Questionnaire

Question: How, if at all, will the proposed introduction of personal transport budgets for travel (for most 16-18 year old impact or affect you?

Responses:

Environment – Responses highlighted the impact on the environment with the likelihood of more cars being used.

Bespoke travel – A response highlighted that the proposal would result in more tailored travel at greater cost.

‘Leave as it is because the situation will lead to a lot of families needing more tailored travel i.e. taxis which the council would have provide and pay for where you believe you are saving you will end up with a higher expense bill’

Cost - Some responses detailed that the proposal is a cost/budget cutting exercise.

'Transport is an integral part of most families with children with SEN lives. It allows us to function without as much stress and anxiety as possible in what is an incredibly stressful life. It would be cruel to go ahead with these proposals and would impact many families in a very bad way'

Vulnerability – Responses highlighted that the proposal would affect the most vulnerable.

'I don't understand why councils feel the best way to reduce their costs is to hit the most vulnerable. You can cut costs but the way you want to implement it will be catastrophic for these children, you need to go back to the drawing board and look at other ways to save money instead of making the vulnerable even more vulnerable.'

Anxiety – Anxiety was detailed as an issue in the survey results with one response detailing the 'immense anxiety' the proposal

Question: If you do think there will be an impact what can we do to reduce the impact of what we are proposing?

Response

Not changing the policy/keeping the policy as it is.

FOCUS GROUPS

A number of themes emerged from the focus groups and therefore the findings are presented in this report under the main themes. The views detailed will help shape the travel arrangements that we will help families to make. Further data can be found in [Appendix 3](#)

Theme 1 - Independence:

Independent travel training was seen as a positive provision for young people who are suitable to undertake travel training.

Children and young people told us that travelling independently gave them freedom, made them feel more grown up and was fun. Many young people enjoyed travelling in a group and some expressed that they were happy to travel on their own.

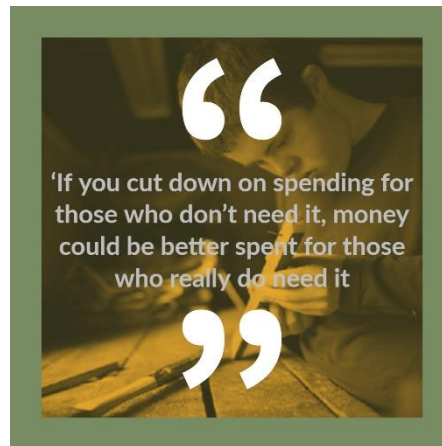
Some practitioners thought that linking young people to travel together was a brilliant idea.

All supported the idea of having apprentices with special needs and or disabilities as travel trainers.



Theme 2 - Cost:

Quote from young person:



There were a number of comments highlighting that the amount of personal transport budget would not be sufficient to meet transport costs. Parents/carers worried that transport would be taken away. Some parents/carers expressed the view that this was a financially driven decision.

Quote from parent: *'Is it a backdoor to take transport away?'*

Additional financial support is available to eligible learners through the provision of the 16-19 Bursary Funds. This support is available to help with additional costs incurred whilst learning, including transport costs.

Theme 3 - Anxiety: One parent expressed the view that the proposed change could reduce anxiety and stress, particularly in the morning, where not having to rush could make life easier.

Some parents/carers expressed their anxiety around their child travelling independently.

Apps linking parents/carers to their child might help to manage anxiety.

Theme 4 - Safety

Children, young people, parents and carers told us that they sometimes worry about safety when travelling independently. Bullying was also identified as an area of concern.

Parents/carers were worried about their children being unprepared to change.

Quote from young person: 'Sometimes it is not safe and I'm worried, it is about staying safe.'

Quote from parent: 'My daughter is only 14 and is scared of travelling by herself, it could be positive but she will need support'

Young people worried about travelling in the dark and had concerns about crossing busy roads.

Parents/carers supported the idea of students travelling with peers and/or buddies.

Parents/carers identified the need for support in the community, for example having safe places in shops, buildings etc.

Theme 5 – Needs-based assessments

Feedback was received to the effect that assistance should be based on need rather than on the funding available.



A number of parents/carers expressed concern around the assessment process, for example who would be undertaking the assessment for suitability for travel training and who would decide whether a young person has severe learning difficulties?

Theme 6 - Communication

Feedback was received around the need for better communication. Parents/carers thought that the Post-16 travel assistance policy should be easy to read and stress free, they thought that the policy should have clearer headings.

Theme 7 - Statutory school age

There were a number of comments concerning the view that as the statutory school age has been raised to 18 the provision of travel assistance should be similarly raised.

Practical arrangements

Parent/carers identified that sourcing passenger assistants would be very difficult. They also highlighted that personal transport budgets would be difficult for working parents. One parent identified that the proposed change may pose difficulties with attendance.

6 CONCLUSION:

Overall responses supported the Council's aim to support young people to travel independently where possible, with sixty-four per cent of survey respondents supporting the idea of young people making their own way to education and training where possible. Over one third of survey respondents supported the preferred option to apply a personal transport budget to most 16 to 18 year old students with SEND in education or training where independent travel training is not appropriate. However, over half of parent/carers of young people with SEND who completed the survey did not support this option.

Forty-seven per cent of survey respondents agreed that a personal transport budget will make students more independent. Forty four per cent of respondents did not agree.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS:

We have gained considerable insight into the needs of young people, parents/carers and practitioners about what makes a good travel assistance policy. We were also able to identify some short and long term impacts from our proposals and what we could do to remedy/reduce some of these impacts. We've laid some some of these things out below:

Earlier conversations to manage concerns and expectations

By ensuring that transport conversations take place at a much earlier age and are part of the EHCP review process we will help families to establish realistic expectations of the likely travel assistance they will receive. Families will have more control over the transport solutions they put in place.

A travel plan will be developed in partnership with Croydon council, the young person, families and professionals to help identify how a personal transport budget can best be utilised. In doing this families will have support and increased flexibility to tailor their child's journey plans. Whilst the council has limited flexibility in the travel assistance we can offer families, every family in receipt of a personal transport budget has the opportunity to use it to develop new routines that best meets their child's needs.

The results of this consultation will be reported to Cabinet in March 2019, who will make a decision based on the consultation.

The short term recommendation is that the council adopts the proposed change to the Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy, for the 2019/2020 academic year and that the changes will be

applied to students starting post-16 education or training from September 2019 or students starting a new course of study in the 2019/2020 academic year. All students carrying on their education post 16 must reapply for travel support. The final Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy will be published no later than 31 May 2019.

Parents and carers identified that some details on the application form were misleading, we listened to this feedback and the application form has subsequently been updated.

Members will continue to be updated with regards to the outcome of the proposals through monthly travel governance board meetings.

In the long term, the council will continue to engage with parents, carers, young people and stakeholders and continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of the changes.