



Buckinghamshire Council

Home to School Transport Update

To: Select Committee
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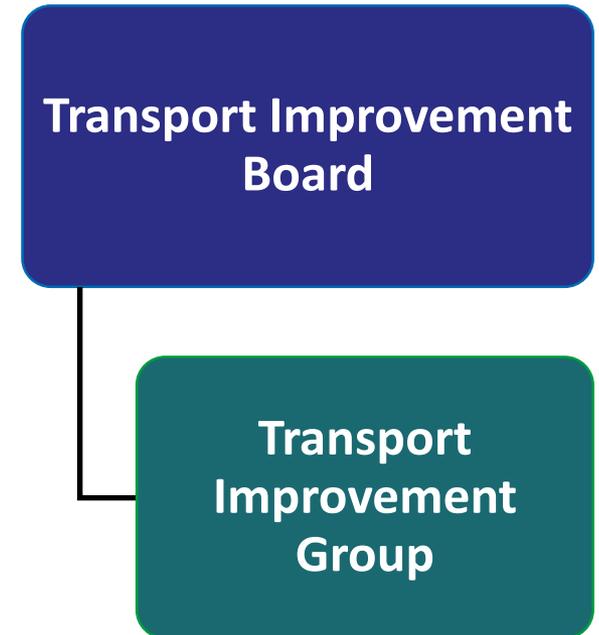
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Client Transport Improvement Programme Overview

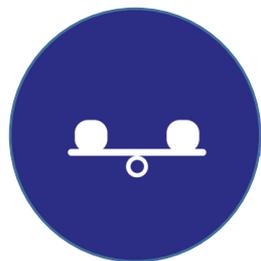
The Client Transport Improvement Programme was set up in February 2020 to:

- Deliver a stable and financially sustainable service.
- Improve the quality of service for all service users.
- Reduce the demand for Council provided transport through supporting viable alternative transport options.
- Support a competitive supplier market with robust contract management.

Governance



Client Transport Improvement Programme Overview



Stabilisation 2020/2021

Complete

- Smooth transport provision in Sept 2020.
- Restructure & business critical vacancies filled.

Underway

- Re-tendering all 1400 contracts.
- New software introduced.
- New SEND Transport Application & Assessment process.
- New customer response system.
- Operational Management Information.



Transition 2021/2022

- New alternatives for SEND parents – Personal Transport Budgets.
- Data Quality Improvements.
- Long term Strategy for supplier market & diversification.



Service Transformation 2022/2023

- Modernised, high quality customer journey: self-service.
- Excellence in passenger transport nationally.
- Financially sustainable home to school transport.
- Alternative Delivery Options for SEND Transport.

Improvement Achievements to Date

There are 80 deliverables within the Programme, 30 already achieved. Key achievements include:

- *Communications*: Improved joined up timely communications to parents/carers, schools and operators with clear, consistent language used. Improvements to the website content and improved customer Contact us form.
- *Customer experience*: A significantly improved experience for pupils, parents, schools and operators for the September 2020 Home to School Transport cycle including clear and agreed lessons learned.
- *Budget management*: A standard financial insight report is now produced monthly on Home to School Transport to enable a better understanding of unit costs and activity driving increased costs as part of the budget management process. Monthly meetings chaired by Director of Transport in place to scrutinise costs.
- *Contract Management Compliance*: Contract Management procedures have been strengthened on standards, reporting, spot checks and annual audits for suppliers.
- *Tendering Phase 1* – New Contracts live for all PRU and Post-16 SEND colleges.

Improvement Key Next Steps

Next 3 months

- Home to School Budget Transition to Transport Services from Children's Services
- Replacement software system
- Tendering Contracts Phase 2 - for Aylesbury area SEND schools
- Personal Transport Budgets for SEND students to empower parents to have greater choice and control how they use funding for their child
- SEN application process – introduction of an online application form and change of handover between teams
- Data Quality Plan ensuring service standards for data recording and performance management
- Better communications – Improvements to the website with clearer content and navigation, enabling parents to easily see the school transport process and timetable to manage expectations

Next 6 months

- Sale of Spare Seats on Council Buses – New application process live with applications for seats with the permanent waiting list removed.
- Tendering process complete for all contracts.
- Improved customer response times.
- Improved turnaround time for allocating transport – 15 working days.

Next 12 months

- Options Appraisal/Business Case for SEND Transport Alternatives – In-house/schools options
- Long term strategy for supplier market management.
- Development of E-ticket solutions for bus passes.

Covid Response Update

Progress continues to be made within the Transport Programme despite Covid pressures. Covid work has been significant, involving:

- Lockdown school transport – Introduced weekly data return process with schools to provide transport to all eligible students in need.
- Social care transport – provision for older people to get to medical appointments.
- Financial grant support - provided commercial school coach services with financial support, helping 11 companies who operate 58 routes that usually carry over 3000 pupils to Buckinghamshire schools which would otherwise have been at risk of withdrawal.
- Timetable Changes - Adjusted timetables of public bus routes throughout the pandemic to prioritise services for key workers, with weekday timetables stood back up from 8 March to pre-lockdown levels.
- The concessionary bus pass scheme for older and disabled residents - extended to allow pre 09:00 travel in the first lockdown to give access to the early morning “silver shopper” opening hours and then in the current lockdown to help with access to vaccine appointments.

School Transport: September 2021

Overview of Key Changes

- The website will have a clear timetable so parents can understand the key dates and timescales throughout the transport allocation process.
- Parents of SEND eligible students will have the option to be considered for a Personal Transport Budget to arrange their own transport and promote independence.
- Council-run school bus routes, timetables and operators will change, as the Council will run transport for children who are eligible for free transport, and then sell spare seats only if they are available. There will be a smaller number of Council-run bus routes and the Council will engage & facilitate commercial operators where there are gaps.
- The Spare Seat Scheme is changing.
 - Parents will be able to apply for seats on specific buses where they are available.
 - Clearer information to parents on the limited availability of spare seats. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school.
 - Prioritisation for some students in line with new policy e.g. siblings, children with SEND or children who are looked after by the Council.

School Transport: September 2021

School Bus Transport Timeline

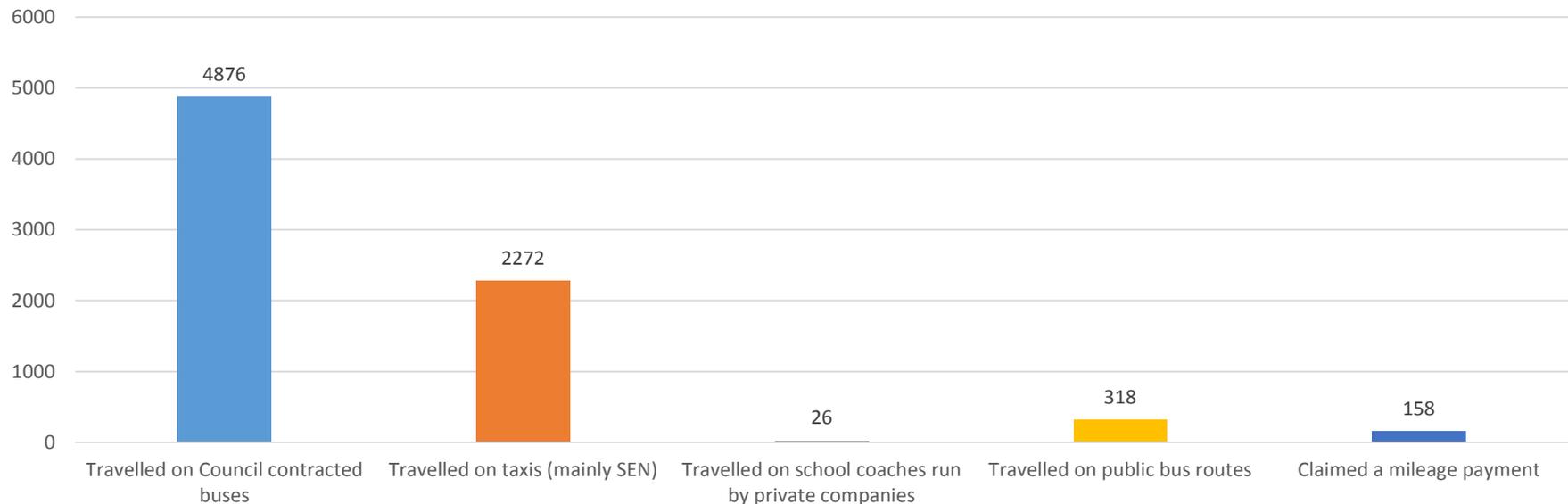
Date	Activity
30 March 2021	Cabinet Decision on Home to School Transport Policy Update
April 2021	Website Updated and communications to parents on spare seat scheme process & timeline for school transport
June 2021	Parents will have a 3 week window to apply for spare seats. The application process will start only after eligible students have been allocated seats so there is clarity on the number of seats remaining which can be purchased
End of July 2021	Parents informed if they have a seat for their child on a Council-run bus. Website information published on bus route timetables
End of July 2021	Bus passes issued for all eligible students
End of August 2021	Bus passes issued for all those purchasing spare seats

Background Information

Home to School Transport: Overview

The Council is responsible for providing free transport for those who legally qualify. The Council contracts with taxi and coach companies to provide transport for eligible students, but also sells spare bus seats that remain.

7,500 students are receiving school transport arranged by the Council.

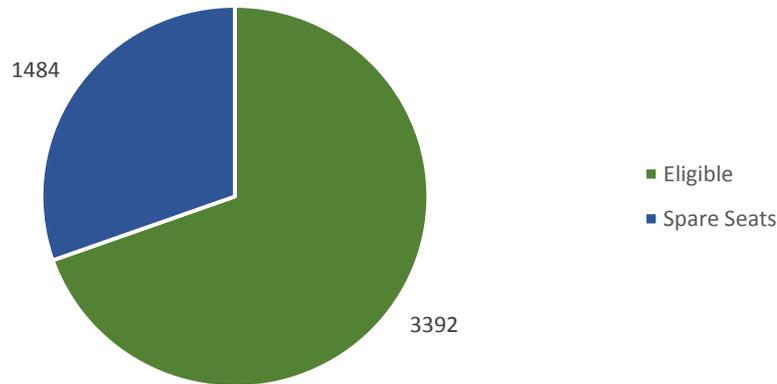


* Data produced Sept 2020

Overview: School Bus Travel in Bucks

For children travelling by bus there are 3 types of buses used...

Council Contracted Buses - School Only



Public Buses – General public

These services are open to the public and children can use them. The Council is not responsible for these buses as public transport in England is de-regulated.

Private Coaches – School only

Private companies run some school only bus routes, funded by ticket sales. The Council is not responsible for these services.

Approximately 3,000 students travel on these services.

* Data produced Sept 2020