

# REVISED SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS AND/OR CARERS

## CONSULTATION:

During the Spring Term 2008, Hounslow is consulting with parents, carers and pupils on SEN Transport.

### 1. Routing Arrangements

In September KPMG the management consultants employed by the Council as part of the Performance Improvement Programme will be making some changes to the arrangements for setting up the routes for some pupils.

### 2. Review of SEN Policy

This leaflet tells you more about the proposed changes and how they may affect you. Please fill in the question and answer sheet attached to give your views on the proposed changes to the SEN Transport Policy.

## KPMG Proposals

The changes are being proposed to provide a more efficient service by making better use of vehicles and reducing journey time.

KPMG are proposing to revise the transport routes using a computerised routing system which is likely to mean changes to your child's journey including pick-up and drop-off times.

Details of the proposed changes to your child's transport for September 2009 will be sent to you during the Summer Term 2009. Other minor changes to routes may be proposed throughout the year and we shall make sure that you are informed of these as they occur.

## **What changes are Hounslow proposing to make to the Policy?**

In addition to the proposed changes in the routing arrangements, we are also proposing some changes to the Policy on which decisions regarding allocation of transport are based.

At present we provide travel assistance for many pupils with Statements who attend specialist education provision in Hounslow and decisions on home to school transport are based on the SEN Transport Policy dated 2004.

The financial and environmental costs of SEN Transport are very high and continue to increase. We are now proposing to make some changes to bring the policy up to date, and to make sure that unnecessary resources are not being spent on providing additional transport where there are other ways of providing it. Any changes to the policy agreed following consultation will be implemented with effect from September 2009.

The main changes and the reasons for the changes are as follows:

### **1. Eligibility**

The revised eligibility criteria needs to take full account of the pupils' age, special needs and ability to travel independently, which may not be related to a specific school or Centre.

### **2. Applying the Revised Policy**

When the existing policy was introduced it was only implemented for new pupils and this has led to different decisions for siblings and pupils within the same neighbourhoods. The Revised Policy will apply to all pupils with Statements including current and future users.

### **3. Other types of travel assistance**

Different ways of helping with travel would be offered and could include:

- Using public transport - improvements in bus and tube services and Transport for London (TfL) free travel scheme for children and young people gives us more opportunities to consider using public transport to get pupils to school.
- Using pick-up points rather than door-to-door transport for most pupils - journey times for pupils continue to increase as a result of congestion and vehicles can spend a lot of time getting to pupils' individual homes. Taking your child to be collected from a pick-up point will assist in reducing the journey time as the vehicle will have to make fewer stops and cover less mileage.

- Providing more travel training so that pupils can travel to school independently - if pupils are going to use public transport successfully they may need further training and we would like to offer different ways of doing this.
- Links to school travel plans where appropriate - schools have developed their own travel plans to promote more sustainable forms of travel to school, these should include all pupils, including those with special educational needs.

#### **4. The role of parents and/or carers**

We expect parents and/or carers to help in getting their child to school. There are many ways in which parents and/or carers can do this: making sure their child gets to the pick-up point on time; encouraging their child to travel independently and helping with training; travelling with them on public transport.

#### **5. Helping reduce environmental damage**

We would have a duty to consider the environmental impact when deciding what type of travel assistance to provide. This is because every additional journey could increase pollution and congestion. Use of the Revised Policy means we have to consider the environmental impact in making decisions on the type of transport

#### **6. An appeals procedure**

We are proposing to set up a formal appeals procedure led by Council Members to enable parents and carers to appeal against decisions on SEN Transport to an Appeals Panel so that decisions may be reviewed outside of SEN processes.

#### **7. Changing the name of the policy**

To reflect the changes above we are also proposing that the policy should be called the SEN Travel Assistance Policy rather than SEN Home to School Transport Policy.



## Questions and Answers:

**Q: My child receives Travel Assistance now – are you going to take it away?**

*A: All existing and new users will need to apply for travel assistance on the revised form. If your child meets the new eligibility criteria they will continue to receive travel assistance, but the type of travel assistance may change. For example, if appropriate, we may ask you to take your child to a pick-up point rather than collect them from home.*

**Q: I have other children who attend different schools, how can I get to two different schools?**

*A: Each request will be considered on its own merits. If you have children in other schools we might ask if we could use the school as a pick-up point. What is appropriate will depend on the individual situation and we hope that we can work together in finding different solutions.*

**Q: I have to go to work, how am I going to get my child to a pick-up point?**

*A: All our decisions on travel assistance have to be based on the needs of the child and not on the needs of the adult. As with children attending mainstream schools, all parents and/or carers have a responsibility in getting their child to school. We want to work with you in finding solutions but expect you to help get your child to school and encourage them to be independent.*

**Q: How can I train my child to travel on tubes and buses?**

*A: We are hoping that schools, parents and/or carers and the Authority will work together in developing appropriate travel training programmes for pupils. Many parents and/or carers, special schools and centres, and other organisations have successful experience in this which we hope to extend to others.*

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## TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY

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*Please answer the following questions and give comments on each of the proposed changes. Please use the space at the end of the questionnaire to add any additional comments or suggestions that you would like us to consider.*

#### 1. Eligibility

Do you agree with the revised eligibility criteria?

Yes:  No:

Additional comments:

#### 2. Applying the Revised Policy

Should the Revised Policy apply to all users?

Yes:  No:

Additional comments:

#### 3. Other Types of Travel Assistance

Do you support the increased use of:

Public transport Yes:  No:

Pick-up points Yes:  No:

Travel training Yes:  No:

School travel plans Yes:  No:

Additional comments:

#### 4. The Role of Parents and Carers

Are you in favour of helping your child in the ways suggested?

Yes:  No:

Are there other ways in which you would like to help?

Yes:  No:

Additional comments:

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#### 5. Helping Reduce Environmental damage

Do you agree that we should consider the environment when making decisions on SEN Travel Assistance?

Yes:  No:

Are there other ways of doing this?

#### 6. Appeals Procedure

Are you in favour of the proposed Appeal Procedure?

Yes:  No:

Additional comments:

*Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions - please use the space below for any other comments or suggestions:*

*Please return your completed form to:*

**Special Educational Needs Service (SEN),  
Children's Services & Lifelong Learning,  
London Borough of Hounslow,  
The Civic Centre,  
Lampton, Road,  
Hounslow,  
TW3 4DN.**