

# **CHILDREN AND LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL**

<b>DATE</b>	16/01/2025
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Jennifer Steel, Service Director for Education, Inclusion & Integration.
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Education Transport including costs
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

## **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

Our ambition for North East Lincolnshire is that all of our children are healthy, resilient, safe and are supported to achieve their full potential. The Council Plan caters for this directly in three of its priorities. The matter outlined in this report (provision of education transport, supports the third priority):

- To deliver high quality statutory, targeted and universal services for children and young people in our borough
- To ensure all children and young people in our community have access to high quality, safe and effective health services when they need it, so they enjoy good health and wellbeing throughout their life
- To ensure our children and young people attain the right skills and learning which enables them to contribute as future citizens, to the continued economic and social development of North East Lincolnshire

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school. For most parents this includes making their own arrangements for their child, who is of compulsory school age, to travel to and from school. In some cases, children are entitled to transport support and local authorities must make the travel arrangements, free of charge, for eligible children. (this includes statutory walking distance and/or unsafe walking routes and extended rights such as receipt of free school meals.) This report focusses on the current activity associated with the provision of transport for education purposes, including cost. This includes all children of statutory school age and post 16.

## **MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION**

This report is being presented as an update as requested by the panel.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

The vast majority of children who we provide transport for have SEND.

There is a statutory requirement in the SEND Code of Practice to provide fully funded transport to eligible children who are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) up to the age of 16.

The number of children with an EHCP has increased steadily in NEL over the last 5 years. EHCP numbers have increased by 19% between 2023 and 2024, and are forecast to increase by a further 19% per annum in future years. These numbers have

a direct impact on the SEN Transport budget meaning further cost increases are forecast for the service in future years.

Complexity of need has also increased – finding suitable travel solutions with appropriately trained staff is becoming more difficult and becomes more expensive with the level of complexity.

The number and variety of placements has also increased over the last 5 years and the number of education placements outside of NEL has increased significantly, some of which are located a significant distance from NEL and the child's home.

The provision of education transport for children with an EHCP post 16 is non-statutory. In NEL, we continue to fund all children up to the age of 19 when this is requested.

It is acknowledged that for some young people who are 16+, it would still be appropriate to review their transport arrangements, but this may result in the same provision being maintained. A previous report on charging options for post 16 SEND transport was taken to Cabinet in December 2022, with Cabinet recommending that a charging option (contribution to travel costs) is implemented following consultation.

Current activity:

- 876 Children/Young Adults are currently accessing transport – Includes Post 16 numbers up to the age of 25.
- 185 different journeys are made each day, travelling to 65 provisions.

Team:

- 8 x NELC vehicles
  - 6 x Mercedes Trekka bus specifically built for accessibility used for Humberston Park
  - 2 x Transit minibuses used for Cambridge Park
- 8 x drivers
- 58 x Passenger Assistants

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Risks:

- Increase in Solo travellers
- Continued increase in EHCP's
- Increase in the number of children accessing bespoke Education other than at school (EOTAS) packages
- Funding – continued pressure on the budget.

Opportunities:

- Part of Delivering Better Value in SEND/SENDAP sufficiency strategy
- Building a new 150 place free school for children with SEMH which will reduce the numbers of children travelling out of Borough and who are most costly
- Developing Resource Specialist Provision (RSP) within our current educational establishments enabling children to remain within setting and Borough and not require (EOTAS) packages
- Increasing capacity within one of our local specialist schools through capital funding to extend the size of the building
- Campaign being put together on independent travel and getting to school to promote the other options of how to get to school and work as part of the Preparation for Adulthood work
- Staff Training

### 3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

The positive benefit to the Council's reputation will be the provision of sufficient and suitable pupil places for the children and young people with EHCP's to be educated within their own locality therefore reducing the need, where appropriate, for the costly provision of transport. Any future proposed changes to post 16 transport may result in negative comms and reputational damage.

### 4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Below is the current quarter 2 position related to the provision of education transport.

Education Transport area	2024/25 Q2 Budget Pressure £'000
SEN – Post 16	£73
SEN – School Age	£923
Excluded and Alternative Provision Transport	£97
Primary School Transport – over 2 miles	£0
Secondary School Transport - over 3 miles	£27
Other	£33
Total Budget Pressure	£1,153

### 5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The new special school will improve outcomes for children with SEND in North East Lincolnshire enabling less children to require provision out of the area and therefore reducing the need to travel long distances which will be far more beneficial for those children.

Enabling children to attend school within their local community, also supports outcomes for adulthood, and promotes a sense a belonging. Our children who are in schools today, become our adults of tomorrow and need to feel part of the local community, developing skills to access shops, leisure activities and community centres effectively. This is much more difficult to do when young people are educated outside of the borough.

### 6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Contribution to traffic congestion and emissions.

### 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

We have seen significant increases in both cost of provision and pupil volumes on Education Transport budgets. Cost of provision being impacted by cost of living - inflationary factors (the majority of transport routes being delivered by external contracts), and pupil volumes being impacted by rises in EHCP number

## **8. MONITORING COMMENTS**

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

## **9. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards affected.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None at this time.

## **11. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

Karen Linton - Strategic Lead, Skills & Employability

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INTEGRATION.**

**ANN-MARIE MATSON, DIRECTOR OF  
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