



**Democratic Services
London Borough of Hounslow
The Civic Centre
Lampton Road
Hounslow
TW3 4DN**

Lead Member for Children's Services and Education

Councillor Allan Wilson
Chair of the Children and Young People
Scrutiny Panel

Your contact: Councillor Robert Oulds
Direct Line: 020 8583 2246
Fax: 020 8583 2252
E-Mail: robert.oulds@hounslow.gov.uk
Our Ref:

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Dear Allan,

I am replying to your letter dated 5th October 2009, in which you have set out the recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel in respect of the draft School Travel Assistance Policy.

I have now had an opportunity to consider the points raised will address them in the order they appear in the letter.

1. Whilst I anticipate that there is likely to be an ongoing need for the Mobility/Travel Assistance Assessor, as it is a new post I would consider it good practice to review the post after two years in order to ensure that the responsibilities of the post have been scoped correctly and are getting value for money. The report has been amended to reflect this.
2. Whilst I understand the need to have clarity on the appeals process it is imperative, given the potential volume of cases, that we have a system that is both workable and time and resource efficient. We have committed to involving parents in the design of the appeals process so that they are fully aware of both the legal requirements/constraints and the time/capacity/resource implications. I would anticipate that after a year of operation we will be in a secure position to incorporate details of the process in the policy when it is next revised.
3. The Transport Section are operating a new system of text alerts to give parents advance warning where the vehicle is running late. The suggestion that all vehicles should be fitted with a GPS satellite navigation receiver is something which would need detailed investigation to establish the cost and practicalities of operating such a system. I would be happy to support a proposal that this issue is

researched and costed and that a report is brought to a future Executive for an informed discussion and decision.

4. I have sought advice on the issue of training. I am advised that all drivers and Attendants, whether employed by the Authority or contractors, are required to have Passenger Assistance Training, which includes basic Child Protection Awareness and Health and Safety guidance. The Transport Section and SEN Team are currently exploring a bespoke child protection and safeguarding training programme specifically for our staff and it would be possible to reflect this in the policy when it is next revised. Other training is required for specific pupils on particular routes, e.g. use of equipment to suction the tracheotomy tube, invasive medical support, training in manual handling etc. However, I am advised that as pupils on routes may change due to the need to review the routes to accommodate new pupils or to adjust following pupils leaving, it is not possible to incorporate all training requirements in the policy. I think it would be more appropriate for parents whose children have a specific need for more specialised input or who travel on a route which includes young people with complex needs to be provided with the details of the training staff have received.

I hope this addresses the issues raised.

Best wishes,

Councillor Robert Oulds
Lead Member for Children's Services and Education