

## Action Plan

The Ombudsman report made a number of recommendations to resolve the broader issues highlighted by the investigation. These are outlined below with the action taken or proposed at this stage.

- *ensure the information it provides to transport applicants on its website, emails and letters is accurate. This includes information on how long it will take to consider applications and how quickly it will put in place transport following a successful appeal;*

The general information available on the Council's website has been updated to reflect more accurately the timelines parents can expect for Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport assistance.

The individual information provided to parents when they make an application has been automated, so that they receive an update email (and text message if requested) at each stage of their application. The stages of an application for transport assistance include assessing eligibility, awaiting further information, assessing transport requirements, arranging transport assistance, transport assistance offered. Parents are provided with relevant contact points at each of these stages should there be any concerns or queries.

- *consider providing information about the appeals process in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) transport in the SEND transport policy and/or post-16 transport policy statement policy rather than requiring parents of SEND children to cross refer to the mainstream policy for this information;*

Information regarding the appeals process is scheduled to be added to the SEN Home to School Transport Policy and will be re-published on the Council's website by the end of April.

- *consider undertaking an initial triage of basic information on transport applications to ensure issues with, for example, names or missing information, may be identified and dealt with promptly;*

The service is considering how best to apply this to working practice to ensure it is an effective process.

- *ensure that appeals are accepted even if they are completed using the wrong form if the essential information is provided;*

The Personal Transport Budget (PTB) appeal form contains a specific question and answer set that allows the appeal to be considered against a scoring matrix. An appeal submitted on the incorrect form will be accepted, however, it is always recommended that the correct form is used to avoid missing information at the first stage of appeal and subsequent delay or frustration.

- *devise a system whereby applications for children with an EHC plan where a school is not yet confirmed or the EHC plan is not yet finalised are not unfairly disadvantaged;*

This requires collaboration between departmental areas. A number of workstreams are currently in progress with Transformation Unit and other project groups to improve links between the SEN and Transport service areas, with a wider feedback piece being developed.

- *provide us with information about the outcomes of the Council's own review of the points raised by this report; and*

A full feedback report is in progress for issuing back to the Ombudsman.

- *meet the costs of transport if this is being arranged and paid for by parents where it is unable to put in place transport after a successful transport appeal. We understand this may take around four weeks to arrange suitable transport provision. However, when this is not possible, the Council should discuss with the family to agree an acceptable solution, including - where necessary – full reimbursement of agreed and evidenced transport costs incurred by the family.*

The Council has committed to this and will achieve it at service level through ownership of task (senior officer) and weekly reporting on all cases where transport is awarded at appeal.