

## Overview of Responses and Recommendations

Budget Proposals 16/17: Learning Independence for Travel (LIFT)		Jane Seymour – Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children’s Team	19 January 2016 Version 2 (Exec)
<b>Proposal:</b>	To remove the budget for LIFT		
<b>Total budget 15/16:</b>	£114,000	<b>Recommended officer saving 16/17:</b>	£74,000 (65%)
<b>Initial proposed saving 16/17:</b>	£114,000 (100%)	<b>Final recommendation to Executive 16/17:</b>	To proceed with this savings proposal, without any modifications
<b>Nos of responses:</b>	79 responses were received. Of these, 17 responses were from organisations and 62 were from individuals.		
<b>Key issues raised:</b>	The main thrust of the comments was that this is a valuable service which enables children with SEN and Disabilities (SEND) to learn to travel to school independently, therefore reducing the Council’s costs. The knock on effect of children learning travel skills is that they are more confident and have more opportunities to socialise and therefore their emotional wellbeing improves. In the longer term, young people with SEND are more likely to access Further Education, employment and a social life if they can travel independently, thereby giving them more fulfilling lives and reducing pressure on the benefits system, Adult Social Care, mental health and other services. Pressure on parents in their caring role is also reduced if young people with SEND are able to live more independent lives.		
<b>Equality issues:</b>	Respondents noted that the group affected were children with disabilities and their families. Concern was also expressed that the children most adversely affected would be children who live in more rural communities, children from less affluent families who are unable to transport them by car and children whose parents have additional needs of their own and are therefore unable to transport them.		
<b>Suggestions for reducing the impact on service users:</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Council response</b>	
	Negotiate with the provider to deliver a slimmed down, more efficient service rather than losing the service altogether (e.g. by reducing overheads / admin costs).	This is an option which might be considered if Councillors are willing to retain some funding with the objective of reducing school transport costs.	
	Bring the service in house, at a lower cost. Use staff to assess every child who is eligible for SEND transport and ensure transport is provided in the most cost effective	This is an option which might be considered if Councillors are willing to retain some funding with the objective of reducing school transport costs.	

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	way possible, as well as offering some independent travel training. Work with other LAs to reduce costs.		
	Outsource the service to the voluntary sector, at lower cost	It is unlikely that any other voluntary sector provider would be able to provide the service at a lower cost than the current provider, which is a registered charity. It should also be noted that there are few organisations with the skills and expertise to run this type of service. When the service was last tendered there were only two tenders, one from LIFT and one from a voluntary organisation which had very little relevant experience.	
	Ask schools to provide the service, for example the two West Berkshire special schools	The West Berkshire special schools already provide some level of travel training, but this is generic travel training delivered to groups of children. The schools are not resourced to deliver the personalised travel training which LIFT provides and which teaches individual pupils the specific route which they need to take to school. Schools might potentially be able to run a more intensive travel service for individual students but they would need to be resourced to do so, so there would not necessarily be any saving. Schools would probably not see this as part of their core business. None of the schools which responded to the consultation expressed any interest in running the service; in fact some specifically said that they would not be able to do so.	
	Group children together for travel training to reduce costs	There would only be scope to do this where children are travelling on the same route. Otherwise, it would only be possible to teach generic travel skills in groups, as opposed to teaching children their own specific route with a view to them travelling to school or college independently.	
	Expect parents to travel train their own children	Some parents may be able to travel train their own children. However, experience suggests that parents generally feel they lack the specific expertise to do this and they are also likely to be anxious about their child’s safety and therefore not motivated to teach independent travel without specialist help. Some parents acknowledged in the consultation that they were unsure about or even opposed to their child travelling independently prior to LIFT becoming involved.	
	Provide some core funding for the service and raise income to meet	This approach would lead to inequity as some parents would be unable to afford a contribution. Similarly, some schools may be willing and able to pay and others may	

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	the full costs by charging parents or schools for the service	not so there would not be parity of provision for children with the same needs.	
	Parents or young people could use their Personal Budgets to buy in to the service	Not all of the children and young people who need independent travel training would necessarily qualify for a Personal Budget through Children’s or Adults’ Social Care. Where they are eligible for a PB, they would be unlikely to want to sacrifice services they already purchase through their PB in favour of purchasing independent travel training, so this approach would be likely to lead to pressure for more and higher levels of PB funded through Social Care.	
	Make use of volunteers	If a service were to be retained in some form, it might be possible to make use of volunteers. However, any volunteers would need to have a high level of supervision by trained and experienced staff and also a significant level of training and support, given the potential risks involved in travel training. Legal and insurance implications would also need to be addressed.	
<b>Alternative options for applying the saving in this area:</b>	<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Council response</b>	
	Fund the service from the Dedicated Schools Grant	This has been put forward to the Schools Forum for consideration. There will be no final decision until March 2016, but thus far the response from the Forum is unfavourable given the pressure on the DFG referred to above.	
	Seek sponsorship from business, such as a bus company	Unlikely to be successful as businesses would be likely to see this type of service as a Council responsibility. An external service provider may have more success in seeking funding from the private sector than the Council.	
	Reverse Councillors’ pay increase and reduce other expenses such as training to fund the service.	This is a matter for Council Members.	
<b>Suggestions for how others may help contribute:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LIFT offered to negotiate with the Council to provide a scaled down service at a lower cost.</li> <li>• The WBC Transport Team offered to run the service in house at a lower cost</li> <li>• One parent offered to talk to other parents to encourage them to take up independent travel training (on the basis that greater take up would generate more savings and could potentially make the service self funding).</li> </ul>		

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<b>Officer conclusion as a result of the responses:</b>	This service is highly valued by those who have used it, who have clearly set out the benefits in their responses. There are some potentially valid arguments about higher costs being incurred if the service is lost entirely, although this is difficult to quantify. Both the current service provider and the Council’s Transport Team have stated that they could maintain an independent travel training service, albeit at a lower level, for a reduced cost. Consideration should therefore be given to retaining some budget for a remodelled service with the aim of reducing school transport costs.		
<b>Officer recommendation as a result of responses:</b>	Feedback has not uncovered any further issues which would prevent the council from proceeding with this proposal. It is therefore recommended that this proposal be implemented with no changes.  <b>However, consideration should be given to retaining some budget (£40,000) for a remodelled service with the aim of reducing SEN home to school transport costs.</b> This service would continue to offer some independent travel training, but its primary purpose would be to drive down SEN Transport costs, e.g. by assessing the most cost effective means of transport in every case, promoting Personal Transport Budgets where these would generate a saving etc.		

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