

Cllr Parry

Madam Chairman, At the heart of the paper before cabinet today, is recognition of the importance of personal development and greater independence. As a council we are honouring our budget commitment to invest in excess of £7m towards assisting with SEND travel for educational purposes. The prominence of Personalised Travel Budgets within the paper will provide an essential mechanism for the delivery of increased choice for those we seek to assist.

Individual sensitivities around SEND policy, may be a factor in any anxiety expressed towards a possible change. It is imperative... that we acknowledge anyone unfamiliar with the potential benefits being proposed, must be consulted and given access to information which is intended to alleviate their concerns, including route safety assessments and independent travel training.

Let us be clear, the primary driver in bring this variation in current policy, is the belief in doing the right thing for an individual child's ability and requirements... and not an assumption based on outdated models and thinking, which for far too long has sort to categorise all SEND children the same.

Therefore. In light of this, we should alter our current default position. Failure to do so, would be to deny a generation of young people an improved structure towards making the transition from childhood to adulthood and possible independence.

The benefits for establishing a carefully considered and suitable pick up point for a pupil's taxi to school, close to their place of residence or the flexibility offered by a personalised travel budget, need to be firmly understood.

To re-iterate the purpose of these options... when fully utilised, both can make a vital contribution in helping SEND children and young people across Dorset, towards the desired path of greater independence.

In drafting this paper, we our mindful of our statutory requirement towards those who could justifiably be categorised as vulnerable... and the need to consult and support individuals and their families through any period of transition is imperative.

Madam Chairman there are 3 Recommendations before cabinet, which are:

Approve the promotion of personalisation, independence and setting the right conditions for the transition to adulthood when considering the choice of home to school transport most appropriate for a SEND child.

Approve the requirement for new SEND applications to be processed using a designated pick-up point (where risk assessed to be possible). This will happen under a strict application of the existing policy wording from 1st January 2019 but will, nevertheless, be subject to consultation.

Approve the amendment to existing policy to say that transport to/from a pick-up point (the nearest bus stop) will be the default setting for all home to school transport (both SEND and mainstream). The amendment will mean that users of the door to-door taxi service would be asked to change from 1st September 2019. This allows time for full consultation (and completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment) with families and children.