



Cognus and the London Borough of Sutton asked Sutton Parent Carers Forum (SPCF) if they would arrange early engagement meetings on our Home to School Assisted Travel Policy review. This was so the Council could hear from parents and carers about their experiences and ideas for delivering travel assistance within the Council's budget.

Two early engagement events were held with families in late March (one face-to-face and one online). This was to ensure parents'/carers' feedback was captured early on and used to shape the consultation. We reviewed the ideas received based on the feasibility of implementation and impact on delivering savings to the Council's budget. Below we have provided a summary of our responses to parents/carers.

We also welcome other ideas on how we could offer travel assistance effectively via the online consultation.

Parents'/carers' suggestions	Council review
Utilising existing school buses	This is an option the Council would like to explore with schools longer term but there are many logistics to work out with schools (e.g. who provides staff for the transport). This would not be part of the policy review as this is more about how the Council and Cognus deliver the service, but the Council will look at this on an ongoing basis.
Sutton Council purchasing its own fleet	The Council and Cognus team did some research into costs and benefits, considering how this works in other local authorities. Based on this research this does not look like a feasible option at this time as it

	would be a lot more expensive to purchase our own fleet and there are also shortages nationally of larger vehicles, so we would struggle to get the right provision in place.
Better engagement with schools around start/end times to reduce transport routes	This is ongoing and has formed part of our recent network review. The latest DfE guidance sets out the expectations for local authorities, parents and schools to work together to ensure children can attend school and Cognus have recently spoken to schools where there have been particular opportunities to address this point and reduce transport routes.
Extended/introduction of after school provision at special schools	This was a really interesting and creative proposal from parents – but could be logistically difficult to put in place, as schools would need to agree to this and the Council would need to find the funding. This might then create an inequity with other families not eligible for transport, who may also want to access this after school provision. However, as part of the policy review the Council has included a proposal around a more flexible use of personal budgets – so it might be able to provide travel budgets to parents which could be used to fund after school activities for individual children and young people (both those requiring transport, and those not, to help with family logistics).
Look at international comparisons for ideas	Given the wide variation in funding, statutory responsibilities and transport networks internationally, this would be challenging. However, we have benchmarked all of our proposed options to what is currently implemented by several other local authorities, including in London, to review best practice and gather ideas on what works in other areas. You can see this in the consultation document.
Promote personal budgets available from the Council	The principle around this was that many parents wanted the flexibility to transport their young people themselves or via family/friends, but needed support with this. We are currently reviewing our transport application form to make the option to access a personal budget more

	<p>prominent and will use the consultation process as an opportunity to promote this more widely, if suitable, to eligible parents. These budgets could also support with costs towards after school provision, as above.</p>
<p>Review parking exemptions for parents' vehicles</p>	<p>This is something we will look into with other departments in the Council and with education settings, over the longer term – this would not be part of the policy review, but it can be reviewed as part of developing the service.</p>
<p>Walking buses with assistants</p>	<p>As above, promotion of personal budgets will assist some families to ensure they, or a family member, can walk their child to school using a personal budget to facilitate.</p>