

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

25 July 2023



Subject: **INDEPENDENT TRAVEL TRAINING – PERMANENT POSITIONS**

Report of: **Sue Harrison, Strategic Director Children and Families**

Relevant Cabinet Member: **Cllr Karen McCarthy - Children, Young People & Families**

Relevant O &S Chair(s): **Cllr Kerry Jenkins - Education, Children & Young People**

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: No. 011636/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 In June of 2022, Birmingham City Council undertook the development of an Independent Travel Training (ITT) Programme. The ITT programme was part of a package of improvements meant to offer children and young people with Special Education Needs and Learning Difficulties a more comprehensive range of travel assistance options.
- 1.2 The Council is working actively with stakeholders to change the culture of the approach to travel assistance. This includes promoting independent travel training as a core service. It is acknowledged that not all students are suitable for independent travel training. An assessment is performed to assess suitability for the programme.
- 1.3 An important programme within the broader transformation of travel assistance, ITT builds the skills and confidence within children and young people to become travel independent. It is widely recognised that travel independence is a core skill to becoming an independent and productive adult, enabling access to colleges, employment, and apprenticeships.
- 1.4 The ITT programme provides travel training where appropriate for children and young people 11 to 25 who have traditionally travelled to/from school by bus/taxi. Once students turn 16, parents are required to contribute to the cost of transport. The contribution is dependent upon their economic circumstance but can be as high as *£790/year (*2022/2023 figures). For students who are eligible for Transport for West Midlands concessionary bus passes, these students will be able to travel for free to colleges or apprentice programmes of their choice, opening other potential opportunities.
- 1.5 ITT reduces the number of individuals who require transportation to and from school. This is an important factor, given the annual transport expenditure continues to significantly increase year on year.
- 1.6 This paper presents a recommendation to build on the success of the pilot and create a permanent BCC ITT programme.
- 1.7 Providing individuals with the ability to become independent and productive members of the community profoundly impacts on their lives and benefits the wider community. Individuals are less likely to require additional support in adulthood. Individuals who are eligible for personal budget assistance will spend less on taxis and maintain more of their personal budgets.
- 1.8 In the recent BCC ITT video, schools, parents, and young people discussed the impact the programme has made on their lives (Link to this video is in **Appendix 3**). Specialist schools involved in the pilot programme noted improved confidence levels (see **Appendix 3**). Parents provided evidence that their young person has become more independent, and the parent has felt more confidence with their young person's abilities to do things on their own. Young people have commented that they enjoy not having to depend on family members to take them places and they can do more as well.

- 1.9 Independent Travel Training addresses challenges to individuals with learning disabilities. This is evidenced in recently released in depth studies and identified in the following reports:
- 1.9.1 The NICE report (2022) “Disabled Children and Young People up to 25 with Severe Complex Needs: Integrated Service Delivery and Organisation Across Health, Social Care and Education”. This paper recommends the provision of a training programme to assist individuals with complex needs to build skills enabling them to travel independently.
- 1.9.2 The National Disability Strategy (2021) and Valuing People (2001). These papers identified the ability to live independently and participate within the community as two substantive challenges faced daily by individuals with learning disabilities. Independent Travel Training provides these individuals with the skills and confidence to achieve greater independence in their lives and the ability to participate more within the community.
- 1.10 The ITT programme supports the BCC Travel to Succeed initiative. This initiative provides young people classified as Not in Education, Employment (NEET) with a free travel bus pass for one year. The ITT programme will provide travel training for any individuals in this programme when required.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the development of the ITT programme from a pilot programme to a permanent programme.
- 2.2 To agree to the permanent structure of the programme to sit within the CYPTS directive but to work across Council directives. To be funded from savings the programme delivers, there is no request for additional budget.
- 2.3 To approve the provision of Independent Travel Training across Children’s Services and the provision of travel support to programmes promoting travel independence to clients of Adult Social Care Services:
- Children and young people in education and with learning difficulties
 - Young people from 18 – 25 with learning difficulties, mobility challenges
 - Adults with learning difficulties and mobility challenges and who require additional skills to achieve travel independence.

3 Background

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council must provide home-to-school travel assistance to children and young people with SEND and EHC plans who meet eligibility criteria.
- 3.2 The UK National Statistics Office reports that EHC plans have increased yearly since 2010. While the total student population in the UK increased by 5% from 2016 to 2022, the number of students with EHC plans increased by 50% during the same period.

- 3.3 In Birmingham, the city Council has seen an increase in the number of students with EHC plans who require school transport from 4200 in 2021/2022 to 5238 in 2022/2023, an increase by almost 25% year on year. (Note: Data held in 2021/2022 was not considered accurate due to deficiencies in the information systems. New systems are being implemented to capture more accurate and timely data).
- 3.4 Local authorities must encourage, enable, and assist the participation of young people with SEND up to 25 in education, employment, or training. Independent Travel Training is a life skill that provides greater opportunities for young people with SEND by increasing confidence in their abilities and is, therefore, essential to achieving this goal.
- 3.5 Birmingham City Council's travel assistance for SEN transportation has experienced an unsustainable year-on-year growth in transportation expenditure. The number of applications for travel assistance has grown and continues to grow; most eligible applicants are transported by taxi or minibus. CYPTS has calculated an average/annum cost of £8528/student on transport. As of January 2023, the data held indicated that transport was being provided for 5,238 students.
- 3.6 The increase in the number of eligible applicants for transport assistance has meant an increase in SEN transport expenditure. The continued increase in expenditure is unsustainable.
- 3.7 Independent Travel Training supports a child or young person's development as they progress from childhood to adulthood; obtaining the skill to travel independently is an essential skill for employability and potentially reduces the need for (and associated costs) for Adult Social Care and/or other statutory services as they progress into adulthood.
- 3.8 Covid-19 has caused an increase in anxiety and mental health in adults with learning difficulties. These individuals may require travel training to build confidence and skills to travel independently.
- 3.9 A summary of the ITT Pilot Programme results to date included in **Appendix 5**

4 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

4.1 Option 1: Do Nothing

The current trend in the cost of providing travel assistance and the trend in the number of potentially eligible applicants do not support a Do-Nothing position.

Option 2: Continue with the current pilot

Due to the expected number of applicants, it is expected that more individuals may be offered travel training instead of transportation. The current size of the travel training team will not have the capacity to meet the projected needs for the 2023/2024 academic year.

Option 3: Move the pilot programme to a permanent programme

This is the recommended option and the proposal being put forth to the cabinet. The programme will be managed within CYPTS but will seek to work across directorates and with other Council programmes. The plan is to manage the growth and ramp up over a 3-year period to the permanent structure; supporting the growth in numbers of individuals referred by CYPTS and supporting other programmes within the Council. A managed growth will allow the programme to ensure operations are efficient and effective across directives.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The pilot programme was implemented in June 2022 and engaged stakeholders in consultation. Webinars, meetings, and workshops were held with various stakeholders including specialist schools, parent/carer forum (representing parents of pupils with learning or physical disabilities), youth action groups representing pupils. The purpose was not just to inform them about the ITT programme but to engage feedback during the early design of the programme.
- 5.2 Webinars were held in June of 2022. Heads and Senco's of specialist schools were invited to webinars to introduce the new programme and start the process of building the relationship with each school and designated trainer. The format of these webinars was to engage the right people within each school.
- 5.3 The Webinars included a presentation, followed by a Q & A session. What was learned was the increasing importance within the special school's curriculum of teaching and training students to become independent adults. The programme was tailored to fit within this curriculum, as the trainers are assigned to specific schools and work within the school supporting this curriculum with travel training discussions.
- 5.4 Four drop-in workshops were advertised through Eventbrite to Birmingham parent Carer Forum members and held in August 2022. Four workshops were offered virtually and one face-to-face. Parents and schools attended to understand the process better and what would work for them.
- 5.5 Birmingham Parent Carer Forum was consulted to understand what policies for programme implementation would be important to their members. They supported the programme's introduction and agreed with the schools that travel training is important for their young person to transition to adulthood successfully. Their main concerns were about the sustainability of the offer and to ensure the programme training was delivered to meet the needs of each student on a bespoke basis.

Meetings are routinely held with all stakeholders including:

- Specialist schools,
- Birmingham Parent Carer Forum,
- Forum of Heads of Special Schools
- Student youth groups (Rise, Yes!)
- Transport for West Midlands

- National Express
- West Midlands Constabulary

5.2 The programme sought to engage and collaborate with other Council directives who deliver travel support for their clients including:

- Adult Social Care, Integrated Transition Team, which includes the Preparation for Adulthood,
- Education & Skills Initiatives, Travel to Succeed

6 Risk Management

6.1 To reach the objectives and targets of the pilot programme, a Value for Money framework was established. This framework is the foundation for the permanent programme and will include quarterly and annual targets, performance measurements and statistics to support efficient and effective resource allocation.

6.1.1 An information management system to support the effective management of resources is key to future growth and will provide KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), and programme statistics to ensure effective resource management and use of funds. The programme keeps statistics on the number of students in the programme at any time, including in-training, waiting for assessment, awaiting training, and completion of training.

6.2 Assessment of programme costs, including salaries, administration, equipment, and materials, are weighed against the cost of providing transport per student (see 7.3.4). The actual costs of providing transport can be estimated/pupil. However, it is difficult to quantify the costs to society and to the individual whose opportunities and activities may be restricted by lack of ability to travel independently. Independent Travel Training contributes to *preventing* these costs to the individual and to society.

6.3 ITT mitigates the risks of:

- the continued growth in demand for transport assistance.
- individuals risk living without or with limited access to community services, colleges, or employment opportunities.

6.4 ITT Benefits:

- Reduction in the number of transport services required, increasing, and promoting sustainability for public transport services
- Individuals who complete training have increased confidence and less fear when travelling independently.
- Individuals have the ability to use a more cost-effective service when travelling as an adult.

- Ability for individuals with disabilities to live comparable lives to non-disabled peers.
- Increased opportunities for employment and access to goods and services
- Community benefits by increasing societal tolerance as more disabled individuals are more visible.
- Less reliance on family, friends, and community professionals
- Spending more money in their community and becoming more active members of the community

7 Compliance Issues:

7.1.1 The ITT programme is in alignment with Birmingham City Council Plan and Strategies:

- Birmingham City Council Corporate Plan 2022-2026, Priority #16, “Improving outcomes of adults with disabilities and older people, by supporting their ability to lead independent lives and exercise choice and control”
- The Birmingham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022-30) aims to create a city where every citizen, whoever they are, wherever they live and at every stage of life, can make choices that empower them to be healthy and happy.

7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 ITT will comply with legislation relating to statutory requirements of local authorities relating to home to school travel as set out in the DfE Home to school travel and transport guidance, Statutory guidance for local authorities, July 2014.

7.2.2 ITT will comply with the Equality Act 2010, in particular the public sector equality duty at paragraph 149

7.3 Financial Implications

7.3.1 To date the ITT pilot has been funded by the CYPTS transport programme.

7.3.2 Funding is required on an ongoing basis; the table below details the funding required for the first 3 years. The programme will continue to be funded by the savings it achieves, there is no request for additional budget.

7.3.3 There is demand for these services in other directives which presents an opportunity for future income generation.

7.3.4 The following chart is of expected programme costs for years 1-3 and as the programme builds up from 4 trainers to 15 travel trainers. The staffing costs are indicative and will require grade confirmation. The chart also shows the expected reduction in transport expenditure i.e., cost avoidance by virtue of pupils completing training and not requiring more expensive

transport provision. Savings achieved will fund the cost of the ITT programme itself and will help to ensure other service pressures can be absorbed, they are not intended to reduce the overall bottom line. ITT is one of a number of programmes being implemented by the service to ensure the best outcomes for child and young people, whilst also ensuring potential budget pressures are minimised and contained.

ITT Cost and Savings	2023	2024	2025
YP ITT Trained	70	219	260
Cost Before ITT	£599,780	£1,876,454	£2,227,754
Cost of ITT Trained			
Bus Pass	£17,850	£55,845	£66,300
Employee Cost	£532,740	£730,016	£854,794
Trainer Equipment/Tools	£11,400	£13,200	£20,500
Prof Development	£1,080	£1,270	£1,500
Training Workshop and Materials	£5,000	£7,500	£10,000
Marketing/Promotions	£3,424	£3,674	£2,800
Total Cost of ITT Trained	£571,494	£811,505	£955,894
Saving / Cost Avoided	-£28,286	-£1,064,949	-£1,271,860

7.3.5 It is expected that by year 3, the programme will have successfully trained up to 530 individuals. To achieve this number the programme will seek to widen the scope, working across the Council. This will require recharging of costs to other directorates, which will need to be negotiated.

7.4 Procurement Implications

No procurement implications.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

7.5.1 To support the delivery, any new posts will be created, job evaluated and recruited to in line with the Council's Recruitment and Selection and Equal Opportunities Policies.

7.5.2 The posts will be advertised to BCC Priority Movers first, followed by internal and then external opportunities as Secondments and/or Fixed Term Contracts for the duration of the project.

7.5.3 The additional resources required by the Children and Families Directorate will be set out as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

7.6.1 Equality Impact Assessment included in **Appendix 1: EIA EQUA1148**.

7.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

7.7.1 This project enables young people to access public travel, which is recommended as part of the Council's response to Climate Change and the Clean Air Zone implementation. See **Appendix 2**

8 Appendices

8.1 **Appendix 1** - Equality Assessment (EQUA1148)

8.2 **Appendix 2** - Environmental and Sustainability Assessment

8.3 **Appendix 3** – Testimonials

8.4 **Appendix 4** – Case Studies

8.5 **Appendix 5** – Pilot Programme Summary

9 Background Documents

None