

ECYE38. Consideration of Changes to Current Home to Schools Transport Policy and Arrangements

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which set out information relating to the planning, administration and financial implications that would result from amendment of the Home to School Transport Policy. The Education, Children & Young People Executive, had agreed at its meeting of 28 January 2020 to instruct the Director of Children's Services to bring a report to a future meeting, regarding school transport for children with more than one residence as set out in the Transport Policy – Operational Guidance, with:-

- (i) an analysis of how many children were affected by the current policy;
- (ii) potential options to provide transport, and
- (iii) information on any cost implications arising therefrom.

Under the current policy arrangements for home to school transport there was provision of a bus pass or taxi service from a single ("main") address, where distance (or safety) entitlement applied.

There were significant challenges faced if existing policy amendments were to be made, which included:-

- Provision of a bus pass and/or taxi service from two addresses, where distance (or safety) entitlement applied, would be required. This could be in different areas.
- In some circumstances the current (main) address was not distance/safety entitled, but the second parent's address would be, so transport was only required from that address.
- Unless both parents lived on the same bus route, a scholar's bus pass would be required for 2 different services. These were both charged at full annual cost.
- If taxi provision was appropriate, then the pattern of residence would need to be fixed (stipulated days) as any changes to that would involve significant administration input and would have contractual challenges for the taxi provider. This could require 2 separate taxi contracts, which would be less efficient and more costly.
- There was no data available on how many families there were in the area where the parents lived at different addresses, and how many of these would become distance or safety entitled under the proposal.
- Such a change could create a precedent that may result in challenge to the way in which "main residence" determined the school catchment area a pupil lived in. Such a challenge, if successful would cause significant admission capacity and planning challenges for the Council in determining school place entitlement. Equally, having accepted that a pupil could have 2 main residences could give rise to the unprecedented situation that both parents could request a place in their own catchment school if they both reside in separate catchment areas.

Included in the Scottish Government's 2021/22 budget were plans to introduce free bus travel for under 22s. While the full details of this scheme had yet to be agreed, this may help support a number of young people who, in addition to their main residence, may also stay at another address some of the time.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive agreed not to amend the Home to School Transport Policy for the reasons summarised in section 7.1 of the report.