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| **Directorate** | Children, Families & Education |
| **Combined Tracker Ref.** | SD/23/001 |
| **Service Director** | Paul Wagstaff and Sue Frost |
| **Service Area** | SEND Transport Overspend |
| **Service Manager** | Debbie Craig & Shaun Askins |
| **Activity/Cost centres** | EE3241, EE3242, EE3243, EK7100, EK7213, EK7321, EK7324, EK7328 EL7572 |
| **22/23 Budget £’000** | 5,258 |
| **22/23 Outturn £’000** | 7,295 (£2,039 overspend) |
| **23/24 Budget £’000** | 6,637 (both external and in-house) |
| **Pressure on this activity in 23/24 (based on 22/23 outturn) £’000** | Q3 is projecting an underspend in-house provision of £432k while externally commissioned transport is projecting £1.477m overspend so a net £1.045m projected overspend is being reported in Q3 (an increase of circa £462k as compared to Q2, mainly in SEND external transport commissioning) |

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| Explain the context behind this pressure and what has caused it* Budget & resources for external contractors including contract/routing staff along with unfunded travel assistance role were originally transferred back to PTU from Public Health in summer 2020 for a limited time of 3 months whilst the invest to save from Public Health was debated.
* The lack of internal capacity to effectively assess SEND applications has compromised the Council’s ability to effectively and thoroughly scrutinise transport applications, manage the budget and develop alternative options (walking escorts, travel training, personal transport budgets).
* In July 2020, 630 pupils with an EHCP (33% of the total number of pupils with an EHCP) were receiving transport; this figure grew to 803 by April 2023, representing a 27% increase in demand (this continues to represent 33% of the total number of pupils with an EHCP). In the same period EHCPs increased by 26%. This indicates a direct correlation between children requiring transport and the number of EHCPs increasing every year.
* ASC clients have over 100 clients requiring daily transport.
* Current transport provision is via the internal fleet of 57 minibuses along with over 100 contractor’s vehicles, providing statutory transport morning & afternoon over 190 school days @800+ passengers
* Additional SEND schools/classes have come on line, including Windmill Hill (growing year on year with the first intake in September 2021) and the expansion of Lady Zia Wernher (phase 1 expansion in Sept 2023 and phase 2 in Sept 24), alongside increasing out of borough placements and LAC transport charges.
* The lack of local SEMH provision leads to more complex children having to travel greater distances out of Borough.
* ASC routes (40 routes @110 clients) are added to the end of the school runs but as demand for places increases, this may have to become distinct ASC transport provision.
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| What action(s) can be taken to keep 23/24 spend in line with approved budget?*
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| **Timescale for budget deficit recovery*** **List the key milestones required to deliver the budget recovery, the estimated amount to be delivered and the estimated date for each**

Much of the planned action is reliant upon changes arising following the proposed restructuring of Transport and also the work of Human Engine, which is planned to take place during Q3, thereby making it challenging to meet the deficit recovery plan in total by the end of the financial year. |
| MILESTONE DETAILS | £ | Date |
| CLMT agreement with the restructuring of staffing to create the resource to tighten budget monitoring and eligibility assessment/review. | 0 | Sept 2023 |
| Appoint staffing in to SENAT and the Inclusion Service Team to manage new responsibilities.  | 0 | Oct 2023 – Jan 24 |
| Human Engine to review national best practice and make recommendations on ways of reducing unit costs | £96k | Sept-Dec 2023 |
| Review eligibility assessments as part of annual review process to determine that eligibility and mode of transport is still appropriate to need  | £20k | Alongside annual review timescales from Jan 24 (when permanent staff are in place) |
| Implement rigorous eligibility assessment process against new EHCPs | TBC | Jan 2024 |
| Introduce and market the agreed personal transport budgets and parent mileage allowances already agreed in principle  | £20k | Nov 2023 |
| Continue the review of lone taxi usage | TBC | Jan-March 2024 |
| Strengthen independent travel training for Key Stage 4 and post 16 students with SEND | £20k | April-July 2024 |
| Implement findings of Human Engine’s research into best practice  | TBC | April 24-Mar 25 |
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| **Quarterly Monitoring updates**With phase 1 of the transformation project ending, a number of deliverables have been formulated by key officers to enable the work to continue under the proposed strengthened permanent internal staffing structure, with transformational support from Human Engine. * Fully costed suitable staff structure agreed **(initial proposal was agreed by CLMT on 28 Sept 23)** Education has now appointed a SEND Transport Manager (due to being in March 24) and a re-advert is in place for the Transport Officer. The PTU is about to go to advert for two additional posts but these have been offered as temporary rather than permanent. **(Jan24)**
* Baseline data provided in Dec by the PTU suggests only 7 families have agreed take up personal travel budgets. Temporary Staffing will be prioritising families to explore and promote this with further and greater information is planned to be provided to the Parent Carers and SENDIAS. **(Jan24)**
* Development and implementation of fully costed independent travel training provision and resources is being explored. A training course for Transport Officers has been identified in readiness for the officers once appointed. **(Jan 24)**
* TAS continues to process new applications and determine eligibility until the new permanent staff are appointed into SENAT. The service provided by TAS includes: receipt, evaluation and processing of transport applications from SEN, ASC & LAC clients, and includes preparation of decision letters, transport panel secretariat, appeals and preparation of mileage & other claims for processing. **(TAS contract has been extended and remains in place until staffing are recruited Jan24)**
* Travel eligibility included in annual reviews moving forward to assess whether transport is still required, particularly for those approaching 16+ where a move towards greater independence is to be promoted. **(Jan24)**
* A new governance structure has been established to strengthen budgetary accountability between Education as the Budget Holder and the PTU as the commissioner and operator of transport. This has also identified an agreed plan of action to begin the work to reduce unit costs. **(28 Nov 23)**
* Data and detail of spend has been difficult to secure due to the lack of a co-ordinated data management. A baseline of Unit Costs for external transport has been identified but a similar baseline of Internal Fleet costs is to be confirmed. Staff Capacity in the PTU is creating a challenge in providing this. Individual students receiving SEND School Transport are being checked against the list held by PTU as there are differences in data. Detailed take up of Personal Travel Budgets is low despite this being promoted. More detailed data is lacking in some areas of Transport but once there is additional resource via Human Engine or new staff progress will be made. **(Jan24)**
* Overhaul and refresh the transport policies for statutory school transport, post 16 transport that adhere to statutory guidance, and are implemented following consultation with key stakeholders. **(Review of existing policies to be undertaken on appointment of Education Staff Jan24)**
* Advise on and ensure there are safeguarding policies and training, in addition to safer recruitment practices, in place for the whole service (internal fleet and external contracts). **(Safeguarding audit of the transport process is planned for April 24 – Jan24)**
* Development of a dashboard of management information with links into financial and other systems to provide easily digestible and accurate data that can be used for reporting to cover both internal & external commissioned services. This needs to be linked to LBC corporate data sources **(awaiting input from Human Engine Jan24)**
* Routes are reviewed regularly to ensure efficiency, to avoid costs and reduce overspend to endeavour to keep the service within the budget. More analysis and review of processes to enable regular re-configuration of routes is needed to assess opportunities to gain efficiencies **(planned but more work to be done, dependent on additional staffing resource in PTU and input from Human Engine Jan24)**
* PTU to develop the market to provide more choice, improve competition, meet demand and provide value for money- ensuring this is in line with LBC corporate goals eg procurement, economic growth, social value and employment **(PTU to explore input from Human Engine Jan24)**
* PTU to develop and propose a fully costed & clear strategy to right size the internal fleet and improve value for money **(PTU to explore input from Human Engine Jan24)**
* The development and implementation of key performance indicators for internal and commissioned services **(PTU to explore input from Human Engine Jan24)**
* Education to develop and implement a communication plan with stakeholders including schools, parent groups (**to be implemented by new permanent team Jan24)**
* Develop and implement the contract management functions for external provision **(PTU appointing additional staffing for the PTU on a temporary basis – long term staffing and budget still to be agreed Jan24)**
* Propose and implement systems to ensure the accuracy of payments for services (including internal recharges) and robust budget management processes, ensuring spend is accounted for. **(dependent on additional staffing resource to support SENAT’s oversight of the budget Jan24)**
* Procurement software to develop effective and efficient route planning ensuring that current LBC software Liquid logic/EYES is taken into account and configure the new system to maximise functionality. IT based scheduling tools are being explored to see whether this may create additional efficiencies. **(Input to the Governance Board required from suppliers on the back of Human Engine involvement Jan24)**
* Development of a longer term SEMH Strategy for Luton is currently taking place which will also include the case for two new local special schools for SEMH children with complex needs, reducing the need for out of borough placements and travel costs for this group. **(initiated Jan 24)**
* A Post 16 SEND Strategy is being developed including greater independence and travel independence to mainstream colleges in area. **(initiated Jan 24)**
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| **QUARTER 1 (to 30/06/23)** |
| On Target Partial (e.g. milestones slipped) = AMBER |  |
| Provide narrative below |
| Phase 1 of wider PTU transformation project ends 31/7/23Q1 variance £1,048k (£906k SEND transport EL 7572)During their six months working with the Council, Edge developed a personal transport budget option and rationalised some routes, reporting cost avoidance of £136k.  |
| **QUARTER 2 (to 30/09/23)** |
| On Target ? (Yes = GREEN; Partial (e.g. milestones slipped) = AMBER, No = RED) |  |
| Provide narrative below |
| Work on personal transport budgets undertaken by Edge has not been fully implemented. A policy paper and suggested direction is going to CLMT late September with a clear plan moving forward. Human Engine have been engaged in initial conversations with a business case currently in construction. |
| **QUARTER 3 (to 31/12/23)** |
| On Target ? (Yes = GREEN; Partial (e.g. milestones slipped) = AMBER, No = RED) |  |
| Provide narrative below |
| Whilst there is movement on staffing in the Education Service with starting date for March 2024, there are some significant issues surrounding the PTU’s capacity to work on both data and actions for change. Progress in capturing accurate and triangulated data is slow and inhibiting a full and accurate analysis of costs and Unit Cost variations between external and internal fleet, thereby creating a difficulty in creating a realistic transport improvement plan which would include capital investment into the fleet, IT investment and a restructuring of ways of working.Costs have continued to rise due to increased demand and complex needs of some children. |
| **QUARTER 4 (to 31/03/23)** |
| On Target ? (Yes = GREEN; Partial (e.g. milestones slipped) = AMBER, No = RED) |  |
| Provide narrative below |
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