

# **Adult Care and Support**

Our vision: Putting people at the centre of decision making, enabling them to find support and be involved in their communities to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.

## **Solihull Metropolitan Borough**

### **Council Adult Social Care**

#### **Travel Assistance Policy**

## 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Fairer Charging Policy see Appendix 2
- 1.2. This policy does not cover travel assistance for service users under the age of 25 who need assistance to travel to and from education establishments. Full time education remains the responsibility of Children's services.
- 1.3. Travel assistance is not a service in its own right but is a means of accessing services or support. The overriding principle is that the decision to provide travel assistance is based on promoting independence and individual service user needs, risks and outcomes.
- 1.4. This policy is based on a general assumption and expectation that service users will meet their own travel needs to access and take advantage of services or support.
- 1.5. Adult Social Care provides travel assistance in a number of ways to people with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, physical disabilities and older people across the borough. Travel assistance is not limited to Council provided transport but includes a number of options which are designed to promote choice and control. This policy outlines how decisions concerning the provision of travel assistance will be made in a consistent and equitable way for all our service users.
- 1.6. Adult Social Care services currently aim to promote the maximum possible level of independence and choice for service users. This is both a local and national priority for all providers of adult social care services. In extending this principle to the Council's provision of travel assistance, this policy sets the criteria that will be used to assess whether the service user's travel needs can be best met through independent travel arrangements or whether Council provided transport services are necessary.
- 1.7. Council provided transport will only be allocated as a last resort and to specified locations if, in the opinion of the assessor, it is the only reasonable means of ensuring that the service user can be safely transported to an assessed and eligible service. Where appropriate travel arrangements are available (either personal or public transport), it will be assumed that the service user will use this as a first option. Council provided transport will only be provided if alternatives are unavailable or inappropriate.

## 2. Aims of the Policy

- 2.1. The aim of this policy is to reflect the national and local priorities described in the DH White Paper Caring for Our Future: Reforming Care and Support-these are outlined below and underpin proposed changes to the existing arrangements for the provision of and charging for Solihull MBC funded transport. The policy is based upon:-
- Promoting independence
  - Maximising choice and control
  - Supporting a healthy lifestyle
  - Improved quality of life
  - Maximising dignity and respect
  - The provision of local accessible services and support

## 3. Principles

- 3.1. The overarching principle is that as part of the Council's commitment to inclusion and independence, service users who travel to a service or provision of support identified by Solihull Adult Social Care, either independently or with assistance from family, friends or support providers will do so. Staff from Adult Social Care will act as facilitators in indicating appropriate transport options.
- 3.2. Following an assessment of need travel assistance will only be provided to meet an eligible assessed need. The travel assistance provided will be appropriate for that need, will provide value for money and be cost effective.
- 3.3. A principle of reasonableness will be adopted i.e. in any given situation, consideration will be given as to whether it is reasonable to expect a service user to make their own arrangements; all transport options will be examined and the service user's desired outcomes identified.
- 3.4. Adult Social Care has a legal duty to provide transport to service users who are eligible for social care support in certain circumstances.

## 4. The Solihull Offer

- 4.1. Travel assistance at Solihull includes:-
- Support to achieve **independent travel**
  - **Personal Budget** – allocation of money which may include travel assistance provided and arranged independently of Solihull Council e.g. use of taxis, bus pass top ups to enable peak time travel on public transport, transport provided by family/friends/carer
  - **Council Provided Transport** – only when it is identified that it is unreasonable to expect the individual to accept any other form of travel assistance.

- 4.2. A charge will be applied for the provision of Council transport. For the latest charge please refer to Solihull MBC Fees and Charges Policy (Fees and Charges Schedule). A person's contribution to the charge will be based on whether the person receives the mobility component of either Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (DLAM and PIPM). Self-funding clients are liable to pay the charge whether they receive DLAM or PIPM or not.
- 4.3. This policy is based on the assumption that service users will travel independently except where assessment shows that this is not possible. The test used in the assessment should be „what will happen if Adult Social Care does not provide transport“ i.e. are there other ways in which the service user can reasonably be expected to attend services and/or support making his/her own arrangements to get there. The provision and/or funding for transport should only be considered if the service user has eligible needs.

## 5. Eligibility

- 5.1. Travel assistance will be considered for adult residents in Solihull aged 18 and over who have been assessed as eligible for services and/or support by Solihull Adult Social Care i.e. eligible services. The decision to provide travel assistance will only follow a full assessment of mobility needs and the risks associated as part of the support planning process – the purpose of the travel assistance should be clearly stated on the service user's support plan.  
For further detail see Travel Assistance-Practice Guidance
- 5.2. Where a service user cannot attend their nearest community activity including college or a day opportunity because there is no placement available or their culturally specific need cannot be met, the assessor may make a case requesting additional resources be allocated: if appropriate this may be on a temporary basis until an appropriate place is found nearer to home.
- 5.3. Where a service user chooses to attend community activities, adult education, or a day centre that is not the nearest and the nearest service is available to meet their assessed need, any additional cost of any transport considered necessary will be met by the service user

## 6. Exclusions

- 6.1. Service users who qualify for concessionary travel i.e. bus pass, will be expected to apply and use this as and when appropriate according to assessed needs.
- 6.2. Resources from Adult Social Care are unlikely to be allocated specifically to meet travel needs where an individual is in receipt of the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment [PIP], the purpose of which is to assist those who have mobility problems, with severe difficulty walking or who need help getting around out of doors. Under normal circumstances no-one in

receipt of the mobility allowance would receive funded transport, unless there are factors limiting their ability to fully utilise the benefits of the allowance e.g. geographical location, the nature of the disability, wheelchair type or carer support requirements. The support plan will determine the level of support offered in these circumstances as part of the assessment process.

## **7. Periods of Absence**

- 7.1. The Council will still have to pay the full cost of council provided transport, even if individuals do not use it. However, if service users pay the full charge for council provided transport and then do not receive the service they have been charged for, their contribution will be amended and any over payment reimbursed. This is done on an four weekly basis. Reimbursement will not be made where a service user does not use the council provided transport on a particular day. Service users will be reimbursed if the service has not been provided due to adverse weather conditions or where a service has been closed and an alternative has not been offered.

## **8. Implementation**

- 8.1. This policy will come into effect from 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013 for new service users. For existing service users this Policy will be implemented at the time of their next review.
- 8.2. For those existing service users who will lose their eligibility for travel assistance under this Policy, their circumstances will be considered sympathetically and there will be a transitional period of up to 3 months to support them to travel independently or to make use of alternative arrangements following their re-assessment/annual review.

## **9. Monitoring, Review and Re-Assessment**

- 9.1. Travel arrangements and any impacts this policy has had on the ability of service users to access appropriate services to meet their eligible social care needs, will be considered by assessing officers at a review or re- assessment of the individual's needs.
- 9.2. A service user or their authorized representative can request a review of their social care assessment at any time.
- 9.3. If the service user disagrees with the assessment and wishes this to be reconsidered then they should contact the Social Worker or Team Manager for further discussion.
- 9.4. All mitigating actions arising from the Fair Treatment Assessment for this policy will be implemented and regularly monitored.

## 10. Complaints

- 10.1. Solihull Adult Social Care Complaints Policy welcomes and responds positively to all comments, compliments and complaints as a means of demonstrating its commitment to working in partnership with individuals and carers.
- 10.2. The Adult Social Care Complaints System comprises of one stage after which the complainant should be advised to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman. A copy of the Complaints Procedure is available on request.
- 10.3. Although complainants can refer their complaints from the outset, or at any stage, to the Local Government Ombudsman, they will not normally be investigated until the Council has conducted its own investigation and made a response.

More information is available from:-

Statutory Complaints Team  
The Council House  
Solihull  
B91 3QB

0121-704-8296

[statutorycomplaints@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:statutorycomplaints@solihull.gov.uk)

## 11. Glossary of Terms

- 11.1 The term “Council provided transport” refers to the fleet of vehicles currently leased by the Council to transport Adult Social Care service users.
- 11.2 The term “travel assistance” refers to a range of options which are available to support individual service users to travel to a service or receive support which meets their eligible needs.