



Brighton & Hove

Community Transport

Helping people lead independent lives

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Cllr Hannah Clare
Chair, Home to School Transport Policy Panel
Brighton & Hove City Council
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove BN3 3BQ

21 July 2020

Dear Cllr Clare

Home to School Transport – Future Arrangements

We are writing to you in advance of the Policy Panel later today further to the Panel's request for ideas to inform future arrangements for Home to School Transport.

As we all know, the children in our care benefit hugely from continuity and the ability to form positive relationships with staff, and as such whatever system we have for Home to School Transport must provide that. We appreciate that getting best value for money is also very important, and we believe the following outline format for the contracting out of Home to School Transport is the best way to provide the continuity our children need and give best value to the council at the same time.

This is by no means an oven-ready solution and there will be detail to work out. The council will also need to consider whether after the experience of the last year it is wise to change the system again, and we don't have the answer for that. However, if the council does choose to review the way it procures Home to School Transport we believe, based on our experience over the last two decades, that this is the most sensible way forward:

1. Operators bid for the whole school, as previously, and work out the most efficient way to transport the children based on their locations and their needs. To enable operators to offer the best value for money (and encourage as many local operators to engage as possible) operators should be able to work with other providers on the council's preferred supplier list to deliver the service. If an operator engages a third party to deliver any of the services, it is that operator's responsibility to ensure the third party delivers the service as specified, and it is up to the operator holding the contract to manage all the runs within their contract regardless of who ultimately delivers the service.
2. Operators notify BHCC of the runs, vehicles, drivers, VPAs and, if appropriate, the provider of the service as well as staff training qualifications and any other relevant information in advance of the start of the service. They also arrange for staff to meet the children and parents/guardians prior to the commencement of the service.

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3. The price is set by the contract according to the winning bid; the price goes up by a certain amount per child if more children are added, and the price goes down by a certain amount if children are removed. There may be different prices depending on the needs of the children; for example a wheelchair user or a child with complicated needs may require more support, staff training or equipment than other children and the prices for additional children may reflect that.
4. The contract should be a minimum of 4 years to enable operators to plan and invest in appropriate vehicles, training and equipment, and to provide continuity for the children.
5. BHCC should give the operator 8 weeks' notice of the number of children for the following year; if BHCC doesn't have the final figure at this time it provides an estimate and the transport is worked out according to the estimate, with extra children taken at a later date at an additional price agreed within the contract. There is no discount for children taken off the run at less than 8 weeks' notice; by this time vehicles, drivers and passenger assistants will likely have already been allocated and there is negligible saving if a children is removed from a run.
6. Each contract has a base price, below which the price never falls no matter how many children are taken off, to enable the management and administration of the contracts to be maintained to a high standard.
7. Payment is made for every registered child every day regardless of whether they travelled assuming the transport was available. This gives operators certainty over their income and costs and enables operators to give lower prices as a result. The alternative is that due to the uncertainty operators over-shoot and the council over-pays.
8. Operators manage the service and are required to find transport from a third party if for whatever reason they cannot provide it themselves. Operators can use any third-party operator on the BHCC preferred suppliers list.
9. Operators notify BHCC and the school concerned of any delays, incidents, alternative arrangements etc at the earliest possible opportunity.
10. Operators provide a simple monthly report with the monthly invoice with KPIs for the contract.

There is clearly a lot more detail to be fleshed out, but a system like this enable operators to plan ahead and design efficient routes, and manage them easily without too much effort on the part of the council. This would enable the council to save money on the extra management and administration, and give operators time to plan, and freedom to manage the service in the most efficient way to maximise continuity and stability for the children.

Tom Druitt
General Manager

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