

London Borough of Croydon
Applying Behavioural Insights to Special Educational Needs Travel Assistance Provision

Croydon Council is committed to providing access to education for as many children and young people as possible. For young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) the ability to travel to their educational establishment forms a crucial part of this process. Accordingly, the Council provides a travel assistance service personalised for every eligible individual, namely council arranged transport provisions, Independent Travel Training (ITT) or Personal Transport Budget (PTB). With the borough's growing population, increased proportion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and the new national 'Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 2015' extension of entitlement up to the age of 25, the demand on the service has grown dramatically both physically and financially, at an unsustainable rate. For example, there has been a 17% increase in students receiving travel assistance with numbers rising from 1044 in 2015/2016 to 1237 for 2017/18. Increased uptake of Independent Travel Training and Personal Transport Budgets, whilst maintaining a user centred service, have been identified as potential areas for more efficient use of resources and service improvement.

In 2017, Croydon Council Behavioural Change Hub (BCH), a unit designed to embed, support and deliver Behavioural Science practice across the organisation, secured funding from the London Government Association for a behavioural insights project aimed at increasing uptake of alternative transport provisions (Independent Travel Training and Personal Transport Budgets). This will help to manage the increasing demand on the service and offer more independence and freedom of choice for the young people receiving support and for their families.

In scoping the project, the Behaviour Change Hub has identified three key behaviours that can be targeted to increase the uptake of alternative service provisions. Each of the opportunities will be treated as a discrete project, with separate communications mediums and measures as follows:

1. Educational professionals making Independent Travel Training referrals to the council

The Behaviour Change Hub will review communications channels with the schools, to maximise appropriate Independent Travel Training referrals. The Behaviour Change Hub will leverage simplification, messenger and affect principles to minimise the schools' fears of Independent Travel Training referral negatively impacting parents, with user testimonials and a checklist used to support school decisions.

A randomised control trial will be carried out in late September through to November 2018 to assess the impact of intervention, pending approval from schools, Special Educational Needs travel and data protection teams. Schools provided with new communications will be used as an experimental group, whilst schools receiving old communications will serve as the control group. The dependent measure will be the

number of Independent Travel Training referrals made by each school going down. Statistical analysis will be carried out to establish significance and determine impact.

2. Increase uptake of alternative provision (Personal Transport Budgets and Independent Travel Training) by re-framing the offer

The Behaviour Change Hub will shadow initial Travel Planner meetings with parents to understand the current presentation of Personal Transport Budgets offer and the barriers to parents taking this up. It is hypothesised that there isn't a standardised approach and supporting documentation that frames Personal Transport Budgets as the optimal decision. To overcome the barriers and aid positive framing of Personal Transport Budgets for parents, training and communication support materials will be reviewed through a behavioural lens and re-designed using behavioural insights to ensure clear consistent messaging that encourages eligible families to take up alternative provisions.

A randomised control trial will be carried out over the period July through September 2018, as the highest number of travel planning meetings are expected during this period. The two travel planners will be randomly allocated to either the control (no change) or experimental condition (new training and communications support) and their change in uptake rates (proportion of parents accepting Personal Transport Budgets) will be compared and assessed for significance using statistical analysis. It is crucial that we look at the change in uptake rates over time and not the absolute value, to account for base rate differences of the two trainers.

3. SEN team professionals collecting relevant data and managing parental expectations from the outset, to streamline eligibility decision process

The Behaviour Change Hub will work with the Special Educational Needs team to understand why travel related data is often not recorded after conversations with parents and schools. Specifically, we are looking to increase the number of application forms with the relevant information recorded in the 'Independence Skills' section of Educational Health Care plans, which will allow the Travel Assistance team to assess eligibility for Independent Travel Training. It is hypothesised that using affect, social norms and prompts can increase form completion rates.

A randomised control trial will be used to measure the success of the intervention, with 'Independence Skills' section completion as the outcome variable, pending service approval. This research stream will start at the start of next academic year, as Educational Health Care plans are unlikely to be initiated at the end of an academic year or during the summer period.

Milestones

Milestone	Timeline
Research/data collection	May-July 2018
Trial design	August- September 2018

Trials	September 2018- February 2019
Report due	March 2019

It is important to note that as these projects have an impact on some of our most vulnerable residents, they are highly sensitive and they be subject to change as directed by our member-led Travel Governance Board. Also, delivery of these projects will depend critically on securing the co-operation and commitment of the service/partners. In particular, the third sub-project summarised above is particularly sensitive. We will need to work with the service and the travel governance board to explain the potential outcomes and gain buy-in. From our perspective this is not an essential project and if it cannot proceed it would not have a material impact on the success of the overall project.

We will keep the London Government Association informed of any changes to the scope of these projects as we progress.

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