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Date: 28 January 2021

Dear Member

REGULATION COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 28 JANUARY 2021

I am now able to enclose, the supplementary presentation to the Thursday, 28 January 2021 meeting of the Regulation Committee, which was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No

5 **Home to School Transport Appeals Update** (Pages 1 - 12)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Watts', is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel

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Home to School Transport

- Covid 19 Response

Craig Chapman
Interim Head of Fair Access
January 2021



Adapting to Change

- Initial impact of school closures for most pupils was significant but limited
- Discretionary transport continued to be provided to children of Key Workers and Vulnerable children
- Eligibility Team moved to home working
- Recent changes to assessment processes helped ensure a smooth transition

Workload during first lockdown

- Advising parents and schools of changes
- Assessment of transport applications for school reopening September 2020
- SEN transport requirements for individual students changed on a regular basis, requiring close collaboration between Transport Eligibility (TE) and Client Transport (CT)

2020/2021 Applications

- This year we saw an increase in applications across all areas
 - **Mainstream Applications 4%↑**
 - **SEN Applications 12%↑**
 - **PTB Applications 23%↑**
 - **Low Income Applications 26%↑**
 - **Post 16 Applications 9%↑**

Preparation for school reopening

- Significantly more challenging than response to first lockdown
 - Government guidance released on 11 August, with schools reopening less than three weeks later.
 - KCC guidance provided to schools and transport users soon after
 - Guidance created a distinction between ***dedicated*** school transport and other transport used for school journeys
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Dedicated School Transport

- Social distancing rules were not mandatory, however, KCC required facemasks (where appropriate) and all students were expected to sit in forward facing seats
- Consistent transport bubbles were created wherever possible, but these did not have to replicate school bubbles
- Kent Travel Saver remained available, although parents were advised to consider alternatives wherever possible

Preparation for school reopening

- Around 110 additional vehicles added to the network to ensure sufficient capacity.
- Network was monitored daily to ensure capacity was utilised efficiently
- Positive response from schools and parents
- KTS and KTS16+ uptake around 70% of normal

Personal Transport Budgets

- Significant increase in parental requests for Personal Transport Budgets (PTB)
- There are now 617 students receiving a PTB as opposed to 447 for the same period last year
- Mileage payments also available where children did not qualify for PTB
- TE will actively encourage parents to remain on PTB once the pandemic is over

Appeals

- We have continued to fulfil our duty of allowing parents the right of Appeal before Members of the Regulation Committee Appeal Panel.
- This has been achieved by adapting the appeals process and offering the parents either a virtual or paper based hearing.
- Virtual hearings are conducted via MS Teams

Current Lockdown and beyond

- Preparations were already underway for limited return to school when lockdown announced.
- Wider transport network remained broadly unchanged until 18 January to ensure availability for BTEC students
- Direct guidance to schools and transport users
- Network monitored on a daily basis to ensure efficient use of resources

Current Lockdown and beyond

- Delays were identified in transport provision for SEN pupils during first lockdown where Client Transport processed requests for change
- Revised process implemented for current lockdown where providers and parents interact directly
- Parallel monitoring by school and KCC

Current Lockdown and beyond

- Earlier process improvements and department's existing "Digital First" approach allows for quick adaptation to further changes in pandemic response.
- Revised online application and appeals submission processes being developed for September 2021 application window
- Postponed improvements to be restarted as soon as pandemic response allows