

Sutton Assisted Transport Provider Forum - Meeting Notes

3rd October 2023

Attendees:

- Rebecca Gardner (Commissioning Lead for Education, London Borough of Sutton)
- Helen Cullip (Assisted Travel Manager, Cognus)
- Mauline Blake (Quality Improvement Manager, London Borough of Sutton)

Assisted transport operators in attendance:

- Sutton Community Transport
- Aardvark Mobility
- People's Choice Transport
- Clocktower Cars
- Sutton Private Hire
- Wallington Cars
- Sherwood Cars
- St Josephs
- Mov-r Cars

Notes:

Item 1 - Welcome/Introductions - Rebecca Gardner (RG) LBS

- RG gave an introduction to the meeting and set out purpose of the meeting - opportunity for joint discussions between Sutton Council, Cognus Assisted Travel team and transport operators delivering routes in Sutton, to discuss key themes, forward planning, questions operators may have and to support the high quality delivery of our services

Item 2 - Sutton Transport Tender Process - Helen Cullip (HC) - Assisted Travel Manager - Cognus

- HC gave an overview of a tender process which was recently run via our DPS system (adam) to clarify some of the vehicle requirements.
- We set out requirements for these recent tenders where we asked for particular sizes - e.g. a vehicle size up to 8 as an example - it may be we have less children on a route initially (e.g. 2), but we need to know the provision is in place to scale up that route (this doesn't apply to recent 4 year routes which we have tendered, which should be at full / correct capacity)
- Question from an operator how to price for this if an 8 seater vehicle may just have 2 young people on board initially? HC - price with a plan in mind to scale up route if needed, to be able to offer provision for the expanded / full size of route
- Question about whether an operator can change a vehicle or driver if they need to scale up e.g. from 2 to 8? HC confirmed we can mitigate this if needed particularly for vehicles or drivers but ideally the same passenger assistant would remain for continuity.

Item 3 - Quality Assurance and Compliance - Mauline Blake (MB) - Quality Assurance Manager - Sutton

- MB provided an overview on the role of the Quality Improvement (QI) team in Sutton - while the Cognus assisted travel team may be going out to look at individual routes e.g. spot checks, Mauline's team looks across all providers, focusing on compliance with policies, safeguarding etc. This includes checking DBS checks and safeguarding, looking at the whole process of recruitment for staff members, and looking at staff training to ensure this is appropriate for specific routes and needs of children and young people.
- The team will undertake a quality improvement audit each year - as part of this will RAG rate providers to see if the current requirements or standards are being met - but clarified this is not about critique of providers, this process is designed to support ongoing improvement and to ensure all providers are meeting the same high standard.
- Noted transport providers should keep their own incident / accident logs - and provide any relevant ones for quarters we are looking at in the QI process - we can look at these jointly where needed to see if there are things we can mitigate / put in place going forward
- The team will also look at providers policies and business continuity plans (these are key documents with all the key information on the operation)
- The QI team also oversee the [Sutton Care Hub](#) - providers are encouraged to use this as this will include relevant updates e.g. job adverts.

Item 4 - Terms of reference for the Provider Forum - All

- RG introduced this item and gave a summary of some of the key elements of the terms of reference, and asked for any comments in relation to this.
- No specific comments or queries, so terms of reference for the forum were agreed.

Item 5 - Meeting Platform - Frequency of meeting / face to face V online - All

- RG opened discussion about frequency and format of these meetings going forward
- Group agreed online meetings was the best format and that every 6 months for 1 hour would be suitable in terms of timing - next meeting agreed for April (start of next financial year)
- Potential items for future agenda included training courses for providers and the assisted travel policy consultation findings which were discussed under AOB

Item 6 - Any Other Business

- HC mentioned well regarded training courses which are recommended by other local authorities - [Spectrum Courses](#) - they provide interactive learning to improve awareness, safeguarding and understanding for transporting children with Special Educational Needs.
- RG mentioned Sutton are currently consulting on the Assisted Travel Policy - most of these options may have an impact for families using the service but are unlikely to have a significant impact for operators, but we can keep operators updated as to the outcome of the policy, the consultation is available here: [Home to School Travel Assistance Policy Consultation - Sutton - Citizen Space](#)