

## Assisted Transport Provider Forum - Meeting Notes 31st October 2024

### [Quality Improvement slides](#)

#### Assisted transport operators in attendance:

- Aardvark Mobility - (Ibrahim)
- Axia (Jasly)
- Clocktower Cars - (Simone & Dr Aziz)
- GW Cars (Wendy)
- KB Radio Cars (Riz)
- KAT Transport
- Nivo Mobility (Naz)
- People's Choice Transport (Stachana)
- Sutton Private Hire (Vicky)
- Terago Operations (David)
- TP Ltd (Adelle)
- Wallington Cars (Lisa and Jon)

#### Attendees from London Borough of Sutton (LBS) and Cognus:

- Mauline Blake (Quality Improvement Manager, LBS)
- Jo Bristow (Assisted Travel Officer, Cognus)
- Maddie Cordani - (Senior Assistant Travel Officer, Cognus)
- Helen Cullip (Assisted Travel Manager, Cognus)
- Esther Fatoba (Commissioning and Project Officer - LBS)
- Anna Jones (Commissioning Manager, Education - LBS)
- Ashleigh Paice (Business Support Officer, LBS)
- Jordan Sinclair - (The Access Group)
- Sarah Wheeldon - (Climate Project Officer, LBS).

No.	Agenda Item
1.	<p><b>Introduction</b> Colleagues introduced themselves.</p>
2.	<p><b>Sustainability and Sustainable Procurement</b> Sarah Wheeldon from the Climate Action and Emergency Planning team began by sharing an overview of Sutton's environmental initiatives and sustainable procurement efforts.</p> <p><b>Borough Emissions Data:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 50% of Sutton's emissions come from domestic sources, primarily due to household heating, gas, and electricity use.</li> <li>● Over 25% of emissions are attributed to transportation, which includes cars, buses, and trains.</li> <li>● The remaining 25% is divided across the public sector and commercial industries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action on Climate Change</b> is one of six priorities within Sutton's corporate action plan, underscoring the significance of sustainability in the borough's goals. The Environment Strategy and Climate Emergency Response Plan support this priority, outlining specific actions Sutton is currently undertaking and planning to</p>

take. This strategy is divided into five major chapters. Each chapter focuses on an aspect of sustainability and environmental protection, with actions and initiatives in place to help achieve these goals. The **Climate Emergency Response Plan** is a supporting document that lists all specific actions Sutton is committed to.

**Key Projects and Initiatives:**

**1. Cleaner Air:**

- Sustainable Transport
- E-Cargo Bikes
- Belmont Train Frequency Increase:
- Air Quality Action Plan

**2. Greener Borough:**

- Sutton's target is for over half of its area to remain designated as **green space**.
- Biodiversity Strategy and Education Plan
- A target has been set to plant 2,000 trees this year

**3. Achieving Net Zero Carbon:**

- Energy Efficiency in Housing
- EV Charging Points
- Council Fleet Electrification

**4. Creating a Circular Economy:**

- Waste Reduction: Focus on reuse and extending the lifecycle of products.
- Green Enterprise Partnership: Businesses that join can receive up to a 70% discount on business rates after achieving the Green Mark Accreditation. The discount applies exclusively to Sutton businesses. The next application round is expected to open in Spring 2024.

**5. Tackling Climate Change:**

- **Climate Resilience:** Sutton is working to help residents adapt to extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and floods.

Sarah reported that the borough is seeing positive trends in emission reductions.

**Sustainable Procurement:**

- Sutton's approach to sustainable procurement is integral to its environmental strategy. A new procurement policy is in the drafting stages, aiming to prioritise suppliers who support the borough's sustainability goals.
- Supplier assessment scoring will be adjusted to favour bids that demonstrate clear, measurable sustainability plans aligned with Sutton's commitments.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional relevant questions related to environmental practices will be included in future tender documents. The new criteria will give greater emphasis to suppliers’ environmental contributions. The policy document is expected to go to committee in the new year for approval by members.</li> <li>• This criteria will benefit suppliers making strides toward electric vehicle (EV) adoption and other environmentally friendly practices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional Grants:</b></p> <p><b>Plug-In Grant:</b> Offers financial assistance for purchasing EVs, though eligibility is restricted to certain vehicle types: <b>Small vans:</b> Up to £2,500, <b>Large vans:</b> Up to £5,000, <b>Wheelchair accessible vehicles:</b> Up to £2,500.</p> <p><b>Important Note:</b> The grant is not available for standard cars and applies only to specific models. It is only valid for vehicle purchases, not leases.</p> <p><b>Other EV Infrastructure Grants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EV Infrastructure Grant for Staff and Fleet:</b> Covers up to 75% of costs, with a cap of £15,000, for small and medium-sized businesses.</li> <li>• <b>Workplace Charging Scheme:</b> Available to both smaller and larger businesses.</li> <li>• <b>EV Infrastructure Grant for Landlords:</b> Supports landlords in installing EV charging infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comments and Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Business Rates Reduction:</b> Helen asked if the 70% business rates discount is available to businesses outside of Sutton. Sarah clarified that it is exclusive to Sutton businesses, though she will investigate schemes in nearby boroughs.</li> <li>• <b>Target for Full EV Transition:</b> In response to a question about whether there is a specific date for suppliers to fully transition to EVs, Sarah noted that no firm date has been set. Sutton is currently working toward the London-wide Net Zero target set by the Mayor, which aims for 2030. She acknowledged that EV costs and insurance can be a barrier, and this remains an area of focus.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>ADAM Interface</b></p> <p>Jordan from the Access Group shared his screen with attendees, guiding them through the recent updates to the Adam Interface.</p> <p>The updates were initiated in response to feedback collected from suppliers via surveys, highlighting the need for a more accessible and user-friendly interface. The new UI aims to make navigation smoother and more intuitive, with an emphasis on clear layouts and simplified access to frequently used features.</p>

	<p><b>Open Feedback Channels:</b> Jordan encouraged suppliers to actively provide feedback on the new interface.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Quality Assurance</b> - Mauline Blake provided a comprehensive overview of the Quality Assurance (QA) team’s responsibilities and their compliance checks within the current cycle.</p> <p><b>Purpose and Scope of QA Checks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Evidence-Based Assessment:</b> QA checks are designed to verify and build confidence in the quality of services provided to young people. This includes evaluating service delivery on transport routes, interactions with the Assisted Transport (AT) team, and reviewing provider reporting.</li> <li>● <b>Key Compliance Areas:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Management Oversight:</b> QA examines providers’ processes to ensure required standards are met.</li> <li>○ <b>DBS Checks, Safeguarding policy and First Aid training</b> must be in place. Documentation is required before QA checks proceed.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Self-Assessments:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● QA distributes self-assessment forms to new providers, allowing a 10-working-day period for completion. These assessments are a critical part of QA’s verification process and cover key areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Safer Recruitment Practices:</b> Ensures providers employ drivers and personal assistants through safe, compliant hiring processes.</li> <li>○ <b>Training and Compliance:</b> Providers must outline the training undertaken by their staff.</li> <li>○ <b>DBS Compliance:</b> Providers confirm that DBS checks are up to date and specific to their company. If a DBS check is registered under another company, a risk assessment is required to ensure compliance. QA also encourages staff to register with the DBS update system to streamline ongoing compliance.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <b>Self-Assessment Frequency:</b> New providers have already received their self-assessment forms, while existing providers will be required to complete self-assessments every 12 months (covering two QA cycles).</li> </ul> <p><b>On-Site Visits and Compliance Ratings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Transport-Specific Checks:</b> Although on-site visits for transport providers are rare, QA may conduct them if deemed necessary.</li> <li>● Once self-assessment information is reviewed, each provider is given a <b>RAG rating</b> based on their compliance level. Providers must meet improvement thresholds outlined by QA.</li> <li>● <b>Follow-Up Actions:</b> Providers are notified of any required actions to bring them into compliance with Sutton’s QA standards.</li> </ul>

	<p>QA Team is committed to fostering open communication with providers and encourages them to reach out to the team via email for guidance or support.</p> <p>QA actively seeks areas where providers can improve, supporting them to raise service quality and compliance standards.</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Service Update and Provider Forum Feedback</b></p> <p>Providers’ support during the transition to the updated Assisted Travel policy has been greatly appreciated.</p> <p><b>Provider Training and Reporting Needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Training Interests:</b> Helen asked providers about specialist training preferences, such as autism awareness.</li> <li>● <b>Reporting:</b> Providers are encouraged to send brief, regular updates on behaviours to the AT Team to support timely interventions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communication with Schools and Parents:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providers were advised to limit staff directly communicating perceived issues at school with parents, as some relayed messages have caused unnecessary anxiety. All reporting to parents should remain factual, and the AT Team and schools should be informed directly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Journey Planner Feedback:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Journey planners have been sent to some families to provide behaviour insights. Providers are encouraged to share feedback with Helen on their usefulness and any further information needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>ADAM Billing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Billing and forecasting are shifting to a weekly basis. Providers are asked to submit bills weekly through ADAM; any challenges with this should be communicated to Helen.</li> </ul> <p><b>Traffic Notifications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Providers confirmed that the notifications from the AT team on local traffic hotspots and roadworks are useful.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Next forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forums will occur every 6 months, so next will be April.</li> <li>● Providers are asked to email Anna potential agenda items.</li> </ul>