

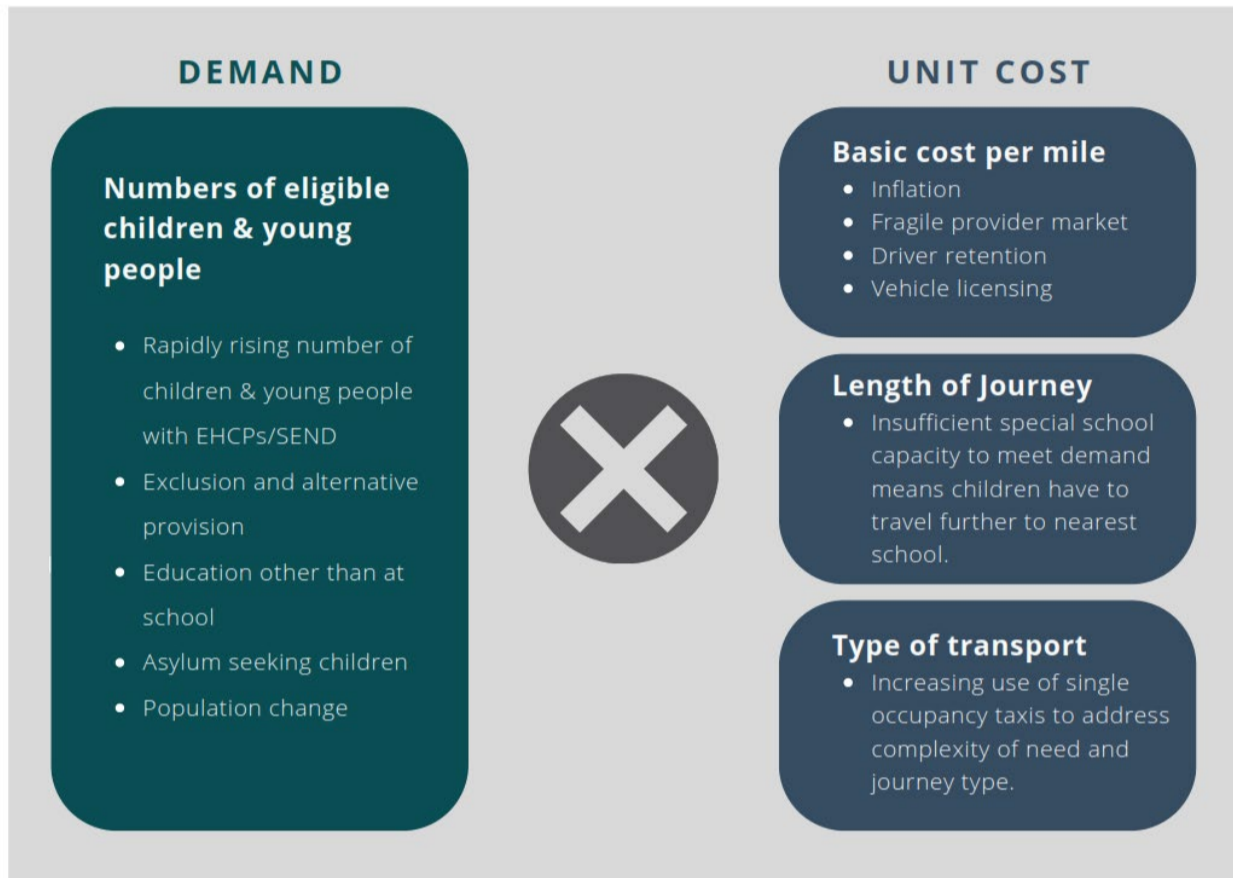
Home to School Transport (H2ST) Position March 2024

1. Introduction

Worcestershire County Council has seen a significant increase in the cost of Home to School Transport (H2ST) in recent years. Costs are a factor of demand (Mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and provision (fuel, mileage, places, labour, type of transport) etc). Within the current year, 2023/24, the costs are forecast to exceed the budget by circa £8m and further growth is envisaged for 2024/25 and beyond. This paper sets out the current position, “the challenge”, things in place to manage demand and cost, as well as other considerations.

Demand and Cost

Fig. 1: Demand and Cost



The above graphic sets out the demand against cost as explained below:

Demand

Number of eligible children and young people

- Rapidly rising number of children and young people with EHCPs and SEND
- Exclusion and alternative provision
- Education other than at school
- Asylum seeking children
- Population change

Unit cost

Basic cost per mile

- Inflation
- Fragile provider market
- Driver retention
- Vehicle licensing

Length of journey

- Insufficient special school capacity to meet demand means children have to travel further to the nearest school

Type of transport

- Increasing use of single occupancy taxis to address complexity of need and journey type

2. The Challenge

Worcestershire County Council transports circa 11.5k children / young people from home to school (and return) every school day. The majority, 75%, are in mainstream settings – Mainstream H2ST. The remainder are predominantly Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) with some Alternative Provision (AP).

The demand and costs for **Mainstream H2ST** remains fairly predictable, dependent on population growth and the availability of school places.

The demand for **SEND H2ST** has grown significantly in recent years and this is forecast to continue. Demand for SEND H2ST rises with the increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) where there are transport requirements, however there is not a linear relationship between the increase in EHCPs and the cost of transport.

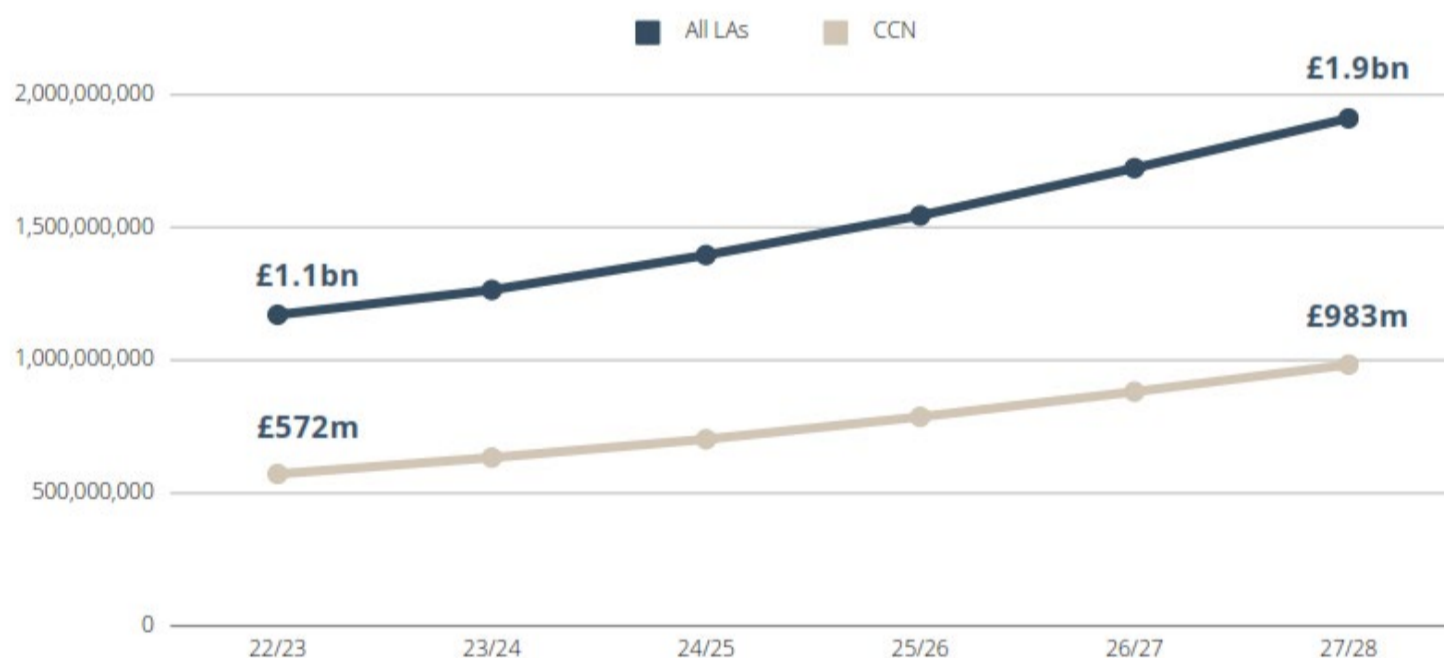
3. National Position

A recent [ISOS-CCN Report](#) looks at how demand and expenditure on H2ST has changed since 2015/16, with particular focus on trends between 2028/19 and 2022/23, and new projections to 2027/28. The evidence gathered demonstrates the cost of providing home to school transport in county and rural settings is “rapidly becoming unsustainable”.

The report highlights that:

- By 2027/28, if there is no significant change to policy, it is projected that nationally all local authorities may be spending as much as £2.6b on home to school transport;
- Of this, it is estimated that CCN member local authorities will be spending £1.48b on home to school transport - £789m more than they were spending 10 years previously;
- This would represent an increase of around 50% on the estimated 2023 expenditure and 114% on the known 2018/19 expenditure;
- **The single biggest driver of cost is pre-16 SEND home to school transport**, growing nationally from £714m in 2018/19 to an estimate of £1.9bn by 2027/28;
- Over the same period, pre16 SEND transport costs will grow in CCN member councils from £338m to £983m;
- **This would represent an increase of 72% on estimated 2023 expenditure, and 191% increase on the known 2018/19 expenditure;**
- When pre and post-16 SEND home to school transport expenditure is combined, costs will almost triple over the decade - from £397m to £1.125b.

Fig. 2: ISOS-CCN Report: Forecast SEND pre-16 Home to School Transport Spend



The report states that the research demonstrates that there are a number of key factors that combine to create a financial environment that is unsustainable. These factors are summarised as follows:

- Embedded challenges within the wider SEND system which is giving rise to more and more children and young people with EHCPs and increasing numbers in special schools;
- Additional demand from groups of vulnerable children including those requiring Alternative Provision;
- The impact of inflation, a fragile provider market and a diminished public transport network;
- A maintained special school sector which is largely full and a burgeoning market for independent and non-maintained special schools;
- Increasingly frequent use of individual taxis and other high-cost forms of transport, partly as a result of the changing complexity of needs and journey types, alongside increased parental expectations and demand for individual travel arrangements.

4. Worcestershire Position

This section focuses on areas of demand and cost associated with Worcestershire H2ST.

4.1. Demand

Population

Worcestershire has seen a sustained growth in the population, impacting on the number of pupils.

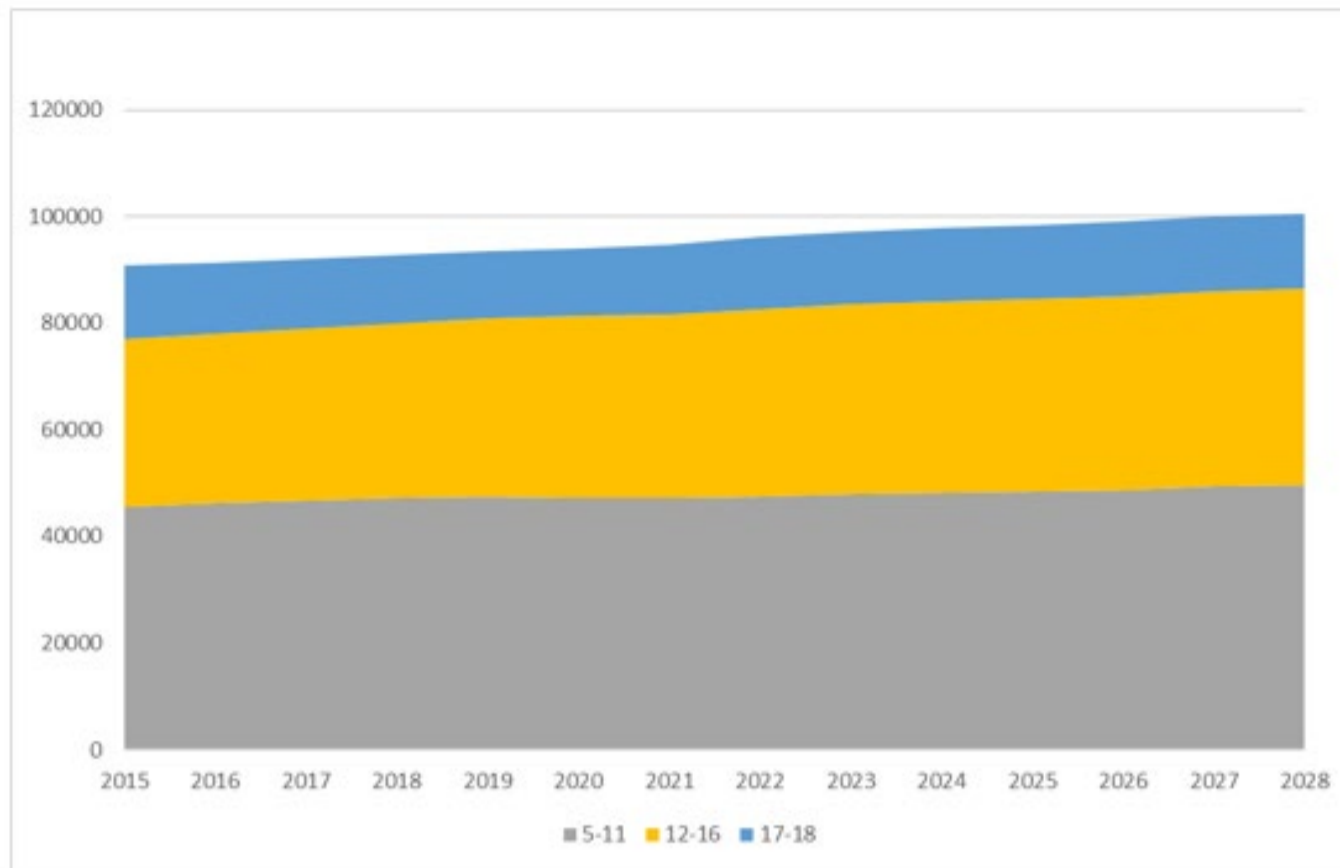
2014 – 2022

- Total population in Worcestershire has increased from 578,732 in 2014 to 609,216 in 2022 (an increase of 5.3%)
- 5-18 year old population has increased from 90,535 to 96,203 (increase of 6.3%)
- 5-11 year old population has increased from 44,609 to 47,578 (an increase of 6.7%)
- 12-16 year old population has increased from 32,033 to 35,038 (an increase of 9.4%)
- 17-18 year old population has decreased from 13,893 to 13,587 (a decrease of 2.2%)

Future Predictions (based on ONS future trends of population)

- This predicts that the total population in Worcestershire will increase from 609,216 in 2022 to 635,472 in 2028 (increase of 4.3%)
- 5-18 year old population is predicted to increase from 96,203 to 100,615 (increase of 4.3%)
- 5-11 year old population has increased from 47,578 to 49,567 (an increase of 4.2%)
- 12-16 year old population has increased from 35,038 to 36,857 (an increase of 5.2%)
- 17-18 year old population has decreased from 13,587 to 14,191 (an increase of 2.1%)

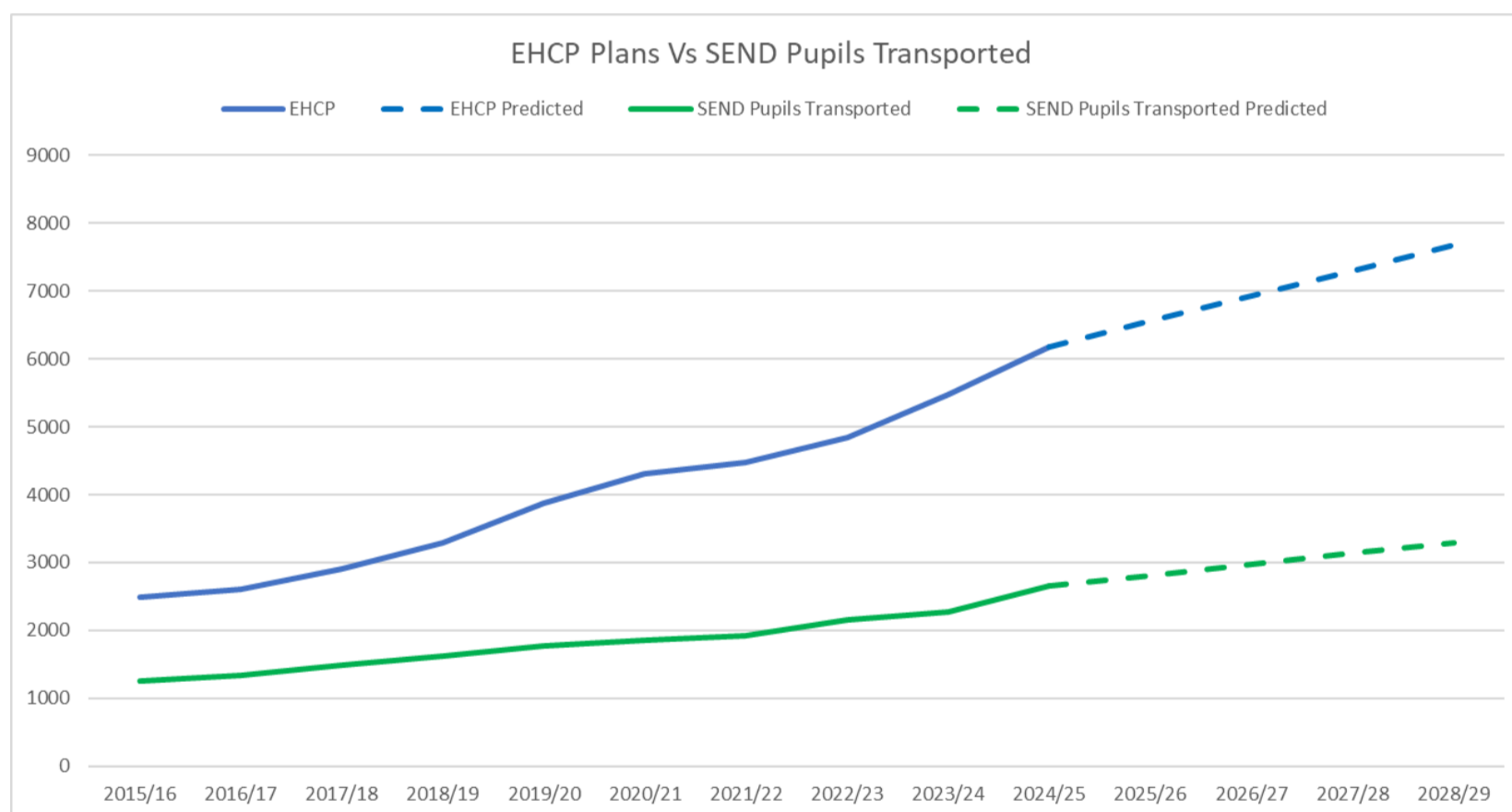
Fig. 3: Population 5-18 years



EHCP

Figure 4 below shows the numbers of pupils with EHCPs and the number of pupils with EHCPs that are transported.

Fig 4. EHCPs



There is a correlation between the growth in EHCP and Transported Pupils. Approximately 43% of the Pupils with EHCP require transport.

4.2. Cost

The cost of transport is not a linear function of demand. Inevitably with greater volume of pupils comes greater cost, however there are other factors:

- Availability of and location of school places;
- Parental preference;
- Increasing numbers of pupils with EHCP attending Independent Schools; There has been an 835% increase in contracts between 2018 (17 contracts) and 2023 (139 contracts);
- Increasing numbers of pupils with EHCP attending Out of County settings. There has been an 80% increase in contracts between 2018 (74 contracts) and 2023 (133 contracts) ;
- Increased journey lengths due to increased use of Independent and Out of County settings.

Table 1: Key Areas of Eligibility (figures as at Autumn 2023)

Key Areas of Eligibility	Forecast £m	Pupil Numbers	Cost / Pupil £k
SEND: Transport provided on Need grounds	7.0	753	9
SEND: Transport provided on distance (Statutory Duty)	6.0	708	8
SEND: 19-25 Transport Provided on Need grounds	1.2	91	13
SEND: 16-19 Provided on Need grounds	0.9	122	7
SEND: 16-19 Provided on Distance (Statutory Duty)	0.9	179	5
SEND TOTAL	16.0	1,853	
Mainstream: Statutory HTST Policy (including nearest school or designated)	4.7	5,413	1
Mainstream: Unavailable Routes	2.5	1,651	2
Pupil Referral Unit	1.5	129	12
Mainstream: Severn Card Post 16	1.2	1,080	1
Mainstream: Severn Card Under 16	0.5	690	1
Remainder: e.g. Low income, appeals, redesignations....	5.4	669	8
TOTAL	31.8	11,485	

4.3. Contracted Transport Provision

The Tables below shows for SEND and Mainstream the split of contracts and passengers (as at Feb 2024) against the mileage operated one way from the contract start point to the establishment served by type of transport used. The table also shows the average cost per mile. Please note this is for “contracted transport”, the figures do not include pupils who have a Direct Transport Payment or use public transport.

Table 2: SEND Contracts Breakdown

Mode	Distance										Average Cost / Mile	TOTAL No. of Pupils
	0-5 miles		5 – 10 miles		10 – 20 miles		20 – 30 miles		>30 miles			
	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils		
WCC Car	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WCC Minibus	0	0	6	56	26	228	11	83	1	8	8.93	375
Contract Car/people carrier	114	153	121	221	248	573	110	248	47	108	7.9	1303
Contract Minibus	0	0	7	83	6	70	2	21	0	0	9.98	174
Coach / Bus	0	0	2	40	0	0	0	0	0	0	19.16	40

Table 3: Mainstream Contracts Breakdown

Mode	Distance										Average Cost / Mile	TOTAL No. of Pupils
	0-5 miles		5 – 10 miles		10 – 20 miles		20 – 30 miles		>30 miles			
	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils	No. Contracts	No. Pupils		
WCC Car	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
WCC Minibus	0	0	1	15	0	0	1	14	1	11	5.49	40
Contract Car/People Carrier	50	85	25	61	17	71	2	10	0	0	14.6	227
Contract Minibus	3	30	4	39	10	123	5	67	0	0	10.23	259
Coach / Bus	1	52	12	548	24	1157	32	1462	11	557	8.84	3776

5. Budget

The H2ST Net Budget and Outturn details for previous and current years is shown in Table 4 below. This shows the TOTAL for H2ST and separately the information for SEND (as the largest part). This shows the 2023/24 forecast figures at Period 10, after assumed income from grants and fees and charges.

Table 4: H2ST Budget

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total H2ST (NET)					
H2ST Budget - £k	14,932	17,415	18,206	18,497	22,477
H2ST Outturn - £k	15,838	17,414	18,206	24,844	
H2ST Forecast - £k					30,683
SEND Only (NET)					
SEND H2ST Budget - £k	7,598	8,833	9,908	10,375	12,602
SEND H2ST Outturn - £k	8,250	8,799	10,294	14,610	
SEND H2ST Forecast - £k					20,870

The net budget for 2024/25 assumes £1.25m of savings are delivered, with full year effect (£2.5m) in the following year.

The net budget for 2024/25 is £35.1m

6. Managing Demand and Cost

There are many actions and potential actions to manage demand and cost, these are also recognised in the ISOS-CCN Report and include:

- Reduction in local eligibility criteria;
- Use of in-house fleet;
- Effective commissioning;
- Route optimisation and efficiency;
- Greater use of Personal Transport Budgets;
- Effective working between SEND and Transport Teams;
- Greater use of Public Transport.

These, along with other considerations for managing demand and cost are part of WCC activity underway.

Further update to be provided April / May 2024.