

CARDIFF COUNCIL TO REALISE EFFICIENCY SAVINGS WORTH £1.3 MILLION ON CHILDREN'S TRANSPORT

Submitted by: Catherine Lane PR

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Cardiff Council has announced that it expects to make efficiency savings of £1.3 million in its transport of children with special education needs. The savings are due to the council's adoption of Capita (<http://www.capita-cs.co.uk>) Children's Services' One Transport software and the resulting renegotiation of contracts with transport providers.

The council has already realised efficiency savings worth £385,000 since implementing the software and estimate, that in the financial year to March 2010, this will grow to £1.3 million.

Stephen Gerrard, school transport team leader, Cardiff Council said: "Due to a change in regulations in 2008, we had to move from using non-licensed to licensed vehicles to transport children with special needs. We estimated that with our current transport arrangements, this change would have increased our costs by £1.3 million per annum. One Transport software has given us the ability to work out how to do this without the subsequent increase in costs and provided us with the information we needed to negotiate more favourable contracts with transport suppliers."

The savings have been made as the software has helped work out how to decrease the number of routes and the average journey length to transport the 830 special educational needs pupils to and from school in Cardiff. The number of miles travelled has been reduced by 1,200 per day, and due to better planning there are fewer vehicles on the road, which is helping the council cut its carbon emissions.

Reduction in the average distance travelled per journey has meant pupils arrive at school fresher and more ready to learn, improving outcomes for children. Parents have been given more accurate times and locations for pupil pick-ups and drop-offs improving the council's service to families.

One Transport pulls together data on routes, vehicle type, and the location and needs of pupils. Using geographic information software, the data is then shown mapped out on to the most appropriate and cost-effective routes. If a change is required or a new pupil added, planners can easily see if there is an appropriately equipped vehicle with space to transport the child. Previously, this whole process was conducted manually with maps laid out on desks and could take around two months to complete before the start of each new school year.

Renegotiating contracts with transport suppliers has ensured they have avoided the year-on-year cost rises that previously seemed inevitable.

Stephen Gerrard, school transport team leader at Cardiff Council, said: "We now ask contractors to quote on a price-per-mile basis depending on the type of vehicle used as the system automatically works out this information for us. This method is much more transparent and gives us greater control; the power was with the contractors before. Whenever our requirements change, due to pupils moving or their needs changing, we know the mileage for each individual route and so know what the cost implications will be. Before, any change we made seemed to increase our costs."

Nic Fell, product director, Capita Children's Services, said: "The work that Cardiff Council has done demonstrates how One Transport software can help councils achieve significant financial savings for a relatively small investment. The system has enabled the council to regain control of transport costs whilst simplifying planning. At the same time they are helping the environment by reducing the average miles travelled per journey from 14 to 12."

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Capita Children's Services is the leading supplier of information systems to the children's services sector providing a range of software and services to schools and local authorities to help raise standards and reduce administration. Children's services teams in over 120 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales currently use Capita Children's Services' One management information system. www.capita-cs.co.uk