

Equality Impact Assessment

Safety of Route EIA

Did you use the EIA Screening Tool? (Delete as applicable)

Yes (please attach upon submission)/ No

1. Explaining the matter being assessed

Is this a:

(Delete the ones that don't apply)

- Change to an existing strategy or policy
- Change to a service or function
- A new strategy or policy
- A new service or function
- Other - Project to remove Travel Assistance from those not eligible

Surrey County Council, in accordance with its statutory duty, will provide free home to school travel assistance for children of compulsory school age to the nearest available school from their home address who meet the qualifying distance criteria, which are:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of eight, measured by the shortest safe walking distance between the home and the school
- 3 miles or more for children aged eight and above, measured by the shortest safe walking distance between the home and the school.

Where a child/young person is not eligible for travel assistance due to the above distance criteria the expectation is that the child/young person can be reasonably expected to walk if accompanied by a parent/carer/responsible adult.

No change has been made to the Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team Under 16 policy it's just that the service are now in a position to apply the below section of the policy:

Where a new route previously considered to be unavailable becomes available (for example through the provision of a new footpath), travel assistance will no longer be provided to any new applicants. Those applicants who have been eligible for travel assistance due to an unavailable route that has become available will be written to with an explanation of the change and provided with assistance for 4 weeks, or to the end of the half-term whichever is longer, after a route is re-assessed before travel assistance will be withdrawn. A parent and or carer will be able to appeal against the decision to withdraw assistance in these circumstances.

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Summarise the strategy, policy, service(s), or function(s) being assessed. Describe current status followed by any changes that stakeholders would experience.

Surrey County Council provides travel assistance to over 10,140 pupils, with 46% (4,676) attending mainstream educational settings. The service invests over £7 million per month to ensure pupils have access to education by providing Travel Assistance to eligible families. Adherence to policy is essential to maintain a consistent and equitable approach to this statutory service.

In February 2021, the Surrey School Travel & Assessment took over mainstream travel assistance requests. Historically, many routes (particularly PROWs) had not been considered appropriate by the previous team for personal safety reasons, many of these routes were removed from Synergy (the GIS used by Admissions and the Travel & Assessment Team).

In line with procedure, the Travel & Assessment team have requested Safety of Route assessments from the Safer Travel Team, who have found safe walking routes available. Although there are only a handful of cases that have sparked this review, as time has passed the Surrey Travel & Assessment team established that there were many others receiving travel assistance who may not be eligible. The Safety of Route (SOR) project aims to remove Travel Assistance this cohort.

The SOR project is looking at 32 schools countywide and will affect approximately 220 mainstream pupils of statutory school age (5-16 years), who currently are receiving Travel Assistance that should not be eligible.

As part of the project, we have identified and are working with internal colleagues that may be affected. These include Senior Leaders, Members, the Locality Bus Team, Admissions and Contact Centre. It also includes external communications with Schools and Coach/Taxi Operators.

All families will be sent detailed communications to inform them in advance (in October 2024, for removal in September 2025) of Travel Assistance being removed. Communications will include links to alternative travel arrangements such as bike schemes and public buses. It will also include a link to a web page detailing previous Stage 2 panels where safe routes have already been heard and agreed in favour of the Local Authority.

An exceptional circumstances document will be created for internal team use to support training needs.

The 2 Stage to appeal process will be included in the comms, and all appeals submitted will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Considering the evidence and holistic family circumstances supplied by the families.

How does your service proposal support the outcomes in [the Community Vision for Surrey 2030](#)?

Specify which of the ten Vision outcomes this work is linked to.

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- ***Children and young people are safe and feel safe and confident.***

Safety of Route Assessments are being completed as part of the project. We are ensuring that Children/Young people as safe on their journeys to/from school, whilst encouraging independence and confidence to travel independently to school.

- ***Everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them succeed in life.***

Due to the economic climate and budget restraints withdrawing Travel Assistance from cohorts that are not eligible means that vital resources can be directed to ensure that the most vulnerable children/families are able to access out limited resources to access education.

- ***Everyone lives healthy, active and fulfilling lives, and makes good choices about their wellbeing.***

By encouraging the use of safe walking routes to journey to school rather than taking contracted transport.

- ***Everyone gets the health and social care support and information they need at the right time and place.***

Withdrawing Travel Assistance from cohorts that are not eligible means that we are able to direct our limited resources to our most vulnerable children/families to ensure they get the support they need.

- ***Communities are welcoming and supportive, especially of those most in need, and people feel able to contribute to community life.***

Communication to families to highlight decision making. Leading to understanding that withdrawing Travel Assistance from cohorts that are not eligible means that we are able to direct our limited resources to the most vulnerable children/families in their community.

- ***Residents live in clean, safe and green communities, where people and organisations embrace their environmental responsibilities.***

The environmental/green agenda benefits of encouraging the use of safe walking routes/ and or using already established public transport rather than taking contracted transport. This leads to fewer coaches/taxis on the road.

- ***Well connected communities, with effective infrastructure, that grow sustainably.***

As above we encouraging the use of already established public bus services. We are offering to mitigate the risk of overrunning the current public routes by contributing to funding additional public bus services if needed.

Are there any specific geographies in Surrey where this will make an impact?

(Delete the ones that don't apply)

- **County-wide**

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- Elmbridge
- Epsom and Ewell
- Guildford
- Mole Valley
- Reigate and Banstead
- Runnymede
- Spelthorne
- Surrey Heath
- Tandridge
- Waverley
- County divisions (please specify if appropriate)

Assessment team – A key principle for completing impact assessments is that they should not be done in isolation. Consultation with affected groups and stakeholders needs to be built in from the start, to enrich the assessment and develop relevant mitigation.

Detail here who you have involved with completing this EIA. For each include:

- Clare Wiggin-Feak - Team Manager - Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team
- Isla Perry - Senior Team Leader - Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team
- Deborah Smith - Senior Project Manager - Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team

2. Service Users / Residents

Who may be affected by this activity?

There are 9 protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010) to consider in your proposal. These are:

1. Age including younger and older people
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
6. Religion or belief including lack of belief
7. Sex
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage/civil partnerships

Though not included in the Equality Act 2010, Surrey County Council recognises that there are other vulnerable groups which significantly contribute to inequality across the county and therefore they should also be considered within EIAs. If relevant, you will need to include information on the following vulnerable groups (Please **refer to the EIA guidance** if you are unclear as to what this is).

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- Members/Ex members of armed forces and relevant family members (in line with the Armed Forces Act 2021 and [Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty](#))
- Adult and young carers*
- Those experiencing digital exclusion*
- Those experiencing domestic abuse*
- Those with education/training (literacy) needs
- Those experiencing homelessness*
- Looked after children/Care leavers*
- Those living in rural/urban areas
- Those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage*
- Out of work young people)*
- Adults with learning disabilities and/or autism*
- People with drug or alcohol use issues*
- People on probation
- People in prison
- Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers
- Sex workers
- Children with Special educational needs and disabilities*
- Adults with long term health conditions, disabilities (including SMI) and/or sensory impairment(s)*
- Older People in care homes*
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities*
- Other (describe below)

(*as identified in the Surrey COVID Community Impact Assessment and the Surrey Health and Well-being Strategy)

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Age including younger and older people

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

Surrey County Council, in accordance with its statutory duty, will provide free home to school travel assistance for children of compulsory school age to the nearest available school from their home address who meet the qualifying distance criteria, which are:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of eight, measured by the shortest safe walking distance between the home and the school
- 3 miles or more for children aged eight and above, measured by the shortest safe walking distance between the home and the school.

Where a child/young person is not eligible for travel assistance due to the above distance criteria the expectation is that the child/young person can be reasonably expected to walk if accompanied by a parent/carer/responsible adult.

The cohort of children/young people identified are reasonably expected to walk the distance dependant on age as per Government guidelines.

There may be cases that the responsible adult due to the age-related health cannot be reasonably expected to accompany the child/young person.

Younger Pupils (Below Age 8):

- **Safety and Supervision:** Younger children may require more supervision and assistance when walking to school. The expectation is that they can walk if accompanied by a parent or responsible adult.
- **Physical Capability:** Younger children may not have the same physical stamina as older pupils, making longer walks more challenging and potentially tiring.
- **Vulnerability:** Younger children are generally more vulnerable to traffic hazards and may not have fully developed road safety awareness, increasing the risk of accidents.

Out of the 15 schools that underwent an assessment no pupils aged between 5-8 years will be affected.

Older Pupils (Aged 8 and Above):

- **Independence:** Older pupils are generally more capable of walking independently. However, the transition from receiving travel assistance to walking may still pose challenges, particularly for those who have relied on assistance for a long time.
- **Safety Concerns:** While older pupils may be more aware of road safety, there are still concerns about their safety, especially if the walking route includes busy roads or areas with limited pedestrian infrastructure.

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- **Impact on Education:** The additional time and effort required to walk could impact the pupils punctuality and readiness for school, potentially affecting their educational outcomes.

Out of the 15 schools that underwent an assessment 219 pupils aged between 8-15 years will be affected.

By providing free home-to-school travel assistance only to those who meet the qualifying distance criteria, Surrey County Council ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively. This allows the Council to focus its budget on those who genuinely need assistance, ensuring that funds are used in the most impactful way.

Encouraging children who do not meet the distance criteria to walk to school promotes physical activity, regular exercise can improve children's physical health, reduce the risk of obesity, and contribute to overall well-being.

Reducing the number of children using motorised transport for short distances can decrease traffic congestion and lower carbon emissions. This contributes to a cleaner environment and supports the Council's sustainability goals.

Walking to school, especially when accompanied by a responsible adult, can help children develop a sense of independence and responsibility. This can enhance their confidence and social skills, preparing them for greater independence in the future.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

All routes have undergone thorough Safety of Route assessments conducted by the Safer Travel Team, ensuring that safe walking routes are available for pupils.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to accompany their children to school. While the Council provides an advised route based on safety assessments, parents and carers are free to choose the route they deem most suitable for their children.

The assessments and subsequent decisions are in line with the relevant government legislation (Road Safety GB's 'Assessment of Walked Routes to School' published in 2016.), which determines the eligibility for travel assistance.

The Council will provide information on alternative travel options, such as public transport, to assist families in making suitable travel arrangements.

The Council will continuously monitor the impact of the policy change on different age groups. Based on feedback and observed outcomes, adjustments will be made to ensure the policy remains fair and effective.

By carefully considering the specific needs and vulnerabilities of different age groups, Surrey County Council aims to manage the removal of travel assistance in a way that minimises negative impacts and supports the well-being and safety of all pupils.

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All families will be sent detailed communications to inform them in advance (in October 2024, for removal in September 2025) of Travel Assistance being removed. Communications will include links to alternative travel arrangements such as bike schemes and public buses.

An exceptional circumstances document will be created for internal team use to support training needs.

The 2 Stage to appeal process will be included in the comms, and all appeals submitted will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Considering the evidence and holistic family circumstances supplied by the families.

What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

New Electoral Arrangements: Surrey County Council is undergoing changes to its electoral boundaries. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has published final recommendations for new electoral arrangements, which will be implemented in future local elections. This includes adjustments to division boundaries to ensure fair representation and effective local governance.

Budget Adjustments for 2024/25: The Council's budget for the financial year 2024/25 includes various measures that could impact residents, particularly those with protected characteristics. The budget decisions aim to maximise positive impacts and minimise adverse ones. This may involve changes in funding allocations for services that support vulnerable groups, including children and families.

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

Identify negative impacts that can't be mitigated and explain why, together with evidence.

Disability

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

Pupils with disabilities may face significant challenges in accessing safe walking routes, even if these routes are deemed safe for the general population. Consideration is required based on the physical and cognitive abilities of these pupils with disabilities as they can vary, and some may require specialised support to travel to school safely.

Pupils with disabilities may be more vulnerable to safety risks when walking to school, including difficulties in navigating uneven surfaces, crossing roads, or dealing with unexpected obstacles.

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The removal of travel assistance may reduce the independence of pupils with disabilities, as they may become more reliant on parents or carers for transportation. Supporting the independence of pupils with disabilities is crucial for their development and well-being.

Families of pupils with disabilities may face increased burdens, both in terms of time and financial costs, if they need to provide transportation themselves. The additional strain on families could impact their overall well-being and ability to support their child's education.

By recognising and addressing the specific needs of pupils with disabilities, the Council can provide tailored support and resources which will help ensure that pupils with disabilities receive the specialised assistance they need, enhancing their safety and ability to travel to school.

With the Council actively considering the needs of pupils with disabilities, the Council demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and equality. This will foster a more inclusive community where all pupils feel valued and supported, enhancing the Council's reputation as a caring and responsible authority.

Providing appropriate support and alternative travel options can help maintain or even increase the independence of pupils with disabilities. This supports their personal development and well-being, allowing them to gain confidence and essential life skills.

The Council continues to engage with disability advocacy groups and the wider community to address the challenges that can lead to stronger community ties and better understanding of the needs of pupils with disabilities.

Out of the 15 schools that underwent an assessment 9 pupils were identified in holding an EHCP. For these pupils travel assistance will remain in place.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

By conducting individual assessments for pupils with disabilities the Council can determine their specific needs and challenges related to travel. This ensures that decisions are made based on the unique circumstances of each pupil. Work with schools, parents, and disability advocacy groups to gather comprehensive information for these assessments.

The Council will work with families to provide alternative travel options for pupils with disabilities who cannot safely walk to school. This could include subsidised transport passes, specialised transport services, ensuring that these options are communicated clearly to families and that support is provided.

An exceptional circumstances document will be created for internal team use to support training needs.

The 2 Stage to appeal process will be included in the comms, and all appeals submitted will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Considering the evidence and holistic family circumstances supplied by the families.

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What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

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Budget Adjustments for 2024/25: The Council's budget for the financial year 2024/25 includes various measures that could impact residents, particularly those with protected characteristics. The budget decisions aim to maximise positive impacts and minimise adverse ones. This may involve changes in funding allocations for services that support vulnerable groups, including children and families.

3. Staff

All STAFF- Replicate this page for each of the protected characteristic or vulnerable groups that are within the scope of this EIA.

Describe here the considerations and concerns in relation to the programme/policy for the selected group.

All staff involved in implementing these changes will receive face-to-face training to ensure they are fully prepared and knowledgeable about the new processes. Detailed process maps and written instructions have been created to guide staff through the implementation steps.

Regular drop-in sessions and ongoing verbal communication will be available to address any questions or concerns. Daily team huddles will be conducted to discuss progress, address any immediate issues, and ensure alignment on tasks.

Weekly meetings will be held to support workload management and provide a platform for feedback and discussion.

Microsoft Teams channels have been established to facilitate easy and efficient communication between team members, managers, and colleagues, ensuring that support is readily available.

By implementing these measures, Surrey County Council aims to support staff effectively during the transition, ensuring a smooth and efficient implementation of the changes.

Describe here suggested mitigations to inform the actions needed to reduce inequalities.

The team will collaborate closely with colleagues across various departments and with Council Members to ensure that all decision-makers are fully informed about the project.

A briefing session for Members took place on 9th September. This session was recorded, and the presentation slides will be distributed to those unable to attend. Following the briefing sessions, a comprehensive FAQ document will be created to address common questions and concerns.

If necessary, additional drop-in sessions can be organized to provide further clarification and support.

The team will also participated in the Member Development Day on 9th October to address any additional questions and provide further information.

By implementing these measures, Surrey County Council aims to ensure transparent communication and effective stakeholder engagement throughout the project.

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What other changes is the council planning/already in place that may affect the same groups of residents? Are there any dependencies decision makers need to be aware of?

If so, please detail your awareness of whether this will exacerbate impacts for those with protected characteristics and the mitigating actions that will be taken to limit the cumulative impacts of these changes.

Any negative impacts that cannot be mitigated?

Identify negative impacts that can't be mitigated and explain why, together with evidence.

4. Recommendation

Based your assessment, please indicate which course of action you are recommending to decision makers. You should explain your recommendation below.

- **Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required.** This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken
- **Outcome Two: Adjust the policy/service/function** to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better advance equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers you identified?
- **Outcome Three: Continue the policy/service/function** despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to advance equality identified. You will need to make sure the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You need to consider whether there are:
 - Sufficient plans to stop or minimise the negative impact
 - Mitigating actions for any remaining negative impacts plans to monitor the actual impact.
- **Outcome Four: Stop and rethink the policy** when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (For guidance on what is unlawful discrimination, refer to the

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[Equality and Human Rights Commission's guidance and Codes of Practice on the Equality Act](#) concerning employment, goods and services and equal pay).

Recommended outcome:

Outcome One: No major change to the policy/service/function required. This EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or negative impact, and all opportunities to promote equality have been undertaken

Explanation:

The current processes in place, alongside the exceptional circumstance's parameters adequately mitigate the risks to our service users. It is worth noting that these pupils are not eligible to Travel Assistance, and we are communicating with these ineligible families in advance to allow adequate time for them to make alternative arrangements for Sept 2025/26.

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5. Action plan and monitoring arrangements

Surrey County Council is implementing the removal of travel assistance for pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria based on distance from home to school. This decision aims to allocate resources more efficiently, promote physical activity, and support environmental sustainability. However, it is crucial to address the potential negative impacts on pupils with disabilities, younger children, and the Council's reputation.

Item	Initiation Date	Action/Item	Person Actioning	Target Completion Date	Update/Notes	Open/Closed
1	February / March 2025	Level of complaints / appeals	Clare Wiggin-Feak	End March 2025	Review level of complaints / appeals following the withdrawal notice for Sept 2025	
2	June 2025	Members refreshers on SOR / Policy	Clare Wiggin Feak / Isla Perry	End of July 2025	Refresher trainer to be given, open Q&A session, regular contact with members	
3	Autum 2025	H2ST General survey	Chris McShee	Early December 2025	Issue survey to users of the application form as part of our general survey	

6a. Version control

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Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
1			

The above provides historical data about each update made to the Equality Impact Assessment.

Please include the name of the author, date and notes about changes made – so that you can refer to what changes have been made throughout this iterative process.

For further information, please see the EIA Guidance document on version control.

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6b. Approval

Secure approval from the appropriate level of management based on nature of issue and scale of change being assessed.

The level of EIA sign off will depend on who the change affects. Generally speaking, for strictly internal changes, Head of Service/ Exec Director sign off should suffice. For changes affecting residents, the Cabinet Member is required to approve completed EIAs.

Approved by	Date approved
Head of Service	
Executive Director	
Cabinet Member	
Directorate Equality Group/ EDI Group (If Applicable) (arrangements will differ depending on your Directorate. Please enquire with your Head of Service or the CSP Team if unsure)	

Publish:

It is recommended that all EIAs are published on Surrey County Council's website.

Please send approved EIAs to: equalityimpactassessments@surreycc.gov.uk

EIA author:

6c. EIA Team

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Team Role

If you would like this information in large print, Braille, on CD or in another language please contact us on:

Tel: 03456 009 009

Textphone (via Text Relay): 18001 03456 009 009

SMS: 07860 053 465

Email: contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk