



SEND
Home to School/
College Travel
and Transport
Policy Public
Consultation



Home to School/College Travel and Transport Policy Public Consultation

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Introduction

This Autumn, Surrey County Council is reviewing and consulting on its Home to School travel assistance arrangements. This is something all Councils are required to do periodically, and we think that there are opportunities through this review to improve outcomes for children and young people in Surrey, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

As a Council we want to make sure we continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities for home to school transport to meet the travel needs of children and young people, enabling them to access their place of education. The Council acknowledges that without this service some of the County's children and young people would be unable to access their school or college, especially those who have significant additional needs, are isolated within the community, or deemed extremely vulnerable. However, our analysis and comparisons with other areas indicate that poor practice and culture are driving poor outcomes for children and young people in Surrey and high costs. Through this consultation, we are seeking to make tangible improvements.

Engagement with young people with special educational needs in Surrey confirmed that young people value independence highly, and that they want their parents, schools and the services that support them to help them prepare for adulthood, including continued access to education, employment opportunities and access to essential services and activities in the community. The ability to travel independently is important to them now to attend school, participate in community life and socialise with friends; it is also fundamental to their future ambitions.

We want to support parents and carers to fulfil their responsibility to ensure their school-aged children attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school. Those children and young people not in receipt of travel assistance from the Council can use a wide range of forms of travel in Surrey, accompanied as necessary, including bus, train, concessionary fares, walking and cycling. We also want to support schools to promote safe routes to school and safe travel skills through their regular curriculum.

Throughout this review, in addition to the existing guidance, we will take account of the consultation on statutory guidance for local authorities on home to school travel and transport for children of compulsory school age, published by the Department for Education in July 2019. This provides guidance and examples on home to school travel arrangements and a checklist for putting in place local school transport policies. There has been no change to the legislation governing home to school travel and transport.

We hope many children and young people, parents and carers, professionals in schools and colleges and residents in our communities will take part in this consultation and give your feedback on our proposals, as well as your ideas and suggestions.

Julie Iles
Cabinet Member for
All-Age Learning

Dave Hill
Executive Director for Children,
Lifelong Learning and Culture

Overview: This consultation

What are we consulting on and why?

Surrey County Council currently has three policies that underpin our Home to School/College Travel Assistance and Transport services. These policies (listed below and available on the Council website) provide guidance for parents and carers, young people and young adults on the transport assistance available for pupils aged 0 – 25 years of age, including eligibility criteria and the travel options available.

- Home to School Transport Policy for 4-16 year olds
- Travel Assistance Policy for Children and Young People with an EHCP: 0-25 years
- Home to school/college transport policy for students of sixth form age

We want to use this consultation to explore how we can maximise outcomes through efficient and effective delivery of home to school travel and transport for children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities.

As part of this review and consultation the Council will be looking to create a simplified, single policy for Travel Assistance and Transport that combines all of the requirements of the existing three policies and policy statements. To ensure that any future policy is focused on delivering improved outcomes, we have adopted a set of design principles to inform these changes:

- Social integration of children and young people
- Independence for children and young people with SEND
- Enabling parents to fulfil their responsibility to make any necessary arrangements to ensure their children attend school
- School responsibility to collaborate with the Council on SEND transport and for the behaviour of children outside the school premises
- Equity
- Environmentally sustainable transport
- Efficient use of public resources

Our practice and culture have resulted in expectations for transport for children and young people with SEND that are well beyond what the Council is required or is able to provide sustainably. As a consequence of this, the Council spends two and a half to three times more per 0-17 year old on SEND transport for children under 16 than Essex and Hertfordshire, counties of similar populations, demographics and geographies. Expenditure on SEND transport is £33.3m this year, equivalent to approximately 5% of the yield from Council Tax. Expenditure has increased by 50% since 2013. Further analysis and detail on this is set out in the next section.

Analysis of demand, spend and trends

While other local authorities have moved to a statutorily compliant home to school travel and transport policy, we continue to provide significant discretionary provision for children with SEND, and some discretionary provision for mainstream young people. This includes some free provision for children under the age of 5 and post-16 young people with SEND, and significant bespoke provision for children and young people with SEND of all ages 0-25.

We spend nearly £700,000 on transporting pre-school age children with SEND, a further £5 million transporting young people with SEND over the age of 16 to college or school and over £11 million transporting children with SEND in a taxi on their own or with an adult passenger assistant accompanying them. We are currently spending nearly 50% more on SEND transport than we did in 2013/14. The Council faces a potential overspend in 2019/20 on the SEND Transport budget of £4 million. The year on year increases are financially unsustainable.

Table 1: Annual spend on SEND travel assistance

Financial year	Annual spend (rounded to nearest £000)
2013/14	£22,253,000
2017/18	£28,062,000
2019/20	£33,260,000

Table 2: 2018/19 Spend on SEND travel assistance by school phase

School phase	Annual spend
Pre-school	£684,713
Primary	£13,350,050
Secondary	£14,239,594
Post-16	£4,986,009.58
Grand total	£33,260,370

As a consequence of this, the Council is a significant outlier in terms of provision and spend on SEND travel assistance, which was confirmed by independent analysis and benchmarking earlier this year. Looking at 2017/18 and comparing our spend on SEND transport per 0-17 year old with that of Hertfordshire and Essex (counties of similar populations, demographics and geographies), we can see the following:

Table 3: Comparison of average spend on SEND transport (2017/18)

Council	Average spend on SEND transport per head for children aged 0-17 (2017/18)
Surrey County Council	£91.50
Hertfordshire County Council	£31.40
Essex County Council	£38.10

Hidden in this is the high number of children and young people who travel significant distances on their own in a taxi, often well into young adulthood. This does not promote independence and preparation for adulthood, nor is it inclusive. This practice isolates children with SEND from their peers. We are currently delivering a service that fosters dependency and isolation for many children and young people with SEND.

The financial challenges facing the Council remain very significant. This means that substantial savings continue to be required to deliver a balanced budget in the current year and a sustainable budget plan for future years, each of which are very important to enable the safe delivery of services to residents.

Expenditure on home to school transport for children with SEND of £33.3 million per year is equivalent to approximately 5% of the yield from Council Tax. To ensure the effective delivery of the Council's statutory responsibilities for home to school travel and transport for children and young people, changes have to be made. This will secure effective public spending and the efficient use of public resources.

Who are we consulting?

We are consulting with the public on our proposals, specifically the following groups requesting their views;

- Parents, carers, children and young people;
- Professionals in schools and further education and governors;
- Parent and carers groups, including Family Voice Surrey;
- Councillors and officers from the county, district, borough, parish and town councils
- Residents and council tax payers.

During the consultation period, there will be significant engagement with children and young people with SEND to understand their experiences of travel to educational settings, their aspirations for independence and adulthood and what supports them to arrive safely, on time and ready to learn. Residents will be engaged through a series of public meetings in four locations in the County, scheduled for the morning and evening. We intend to hold eight public events during the consultation.

How are we consulting?

We are asking a number of questions in a survey about our proposals and for any other ideas, feedback and suggestions in relation to travel needs of children and young people accessing education. The survey will be available online, via the Council's website and via the Local Offer. We will also provide paper copies and an 'easy read' version.

The public events will also be an opportunity to discuss the proposals. Details of event times and locations are published on Surrey County Council's website, the Surrey Local Offer & Surrey Says website www.surreysays.co.uk.

What is the timescale?

We are consulting for 12 weeks, starting on 16 September 2019 until 8 December 2019. Once the consultation has closed, we will review all of the responses and prepare a report for the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning who has responsibility for Home to School Transport. The Cabinet Member will consider any proposals to change our home to school transport policy and make a decision in January 2020. If there are any changes to our policy, these will be published by February 2020 and we will implement any agreed changes from 1 September 2020, with transitional arrangements as necessary.

Information about our equalities impact assessment

We have drawn up an initial equalities impact assessment (EIA), focusing on the proposals identified in the consultation. Once the consultation has closed and responses reviewed, the EIA will be updated and shared with the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning to take into account before making a decision on any changes to the current policy.

Our initial assessment identified that if the preferred options are implemented, they may have a negative impact on some children, young people and their families. However, without changes, we have identified that there is a significant risk of the service becoming unsustainable which may impact access and service delivery.

We anticipate any changes to the current home to school travel and transport arrangements will impact more on the following:

- Children aged under 5 (non-compulsory school age);
- Young people aged 16 to 25;

- Young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and particularly those living in a rural area or families with a low income.

As these groups are more likely to find any changes difficult, there is potential for some negative impact. Therefore, if changes are made to current services, these groups will need the Council's support to minimise any resulting negative impact. This includes introducing transition arrangements where appropriate and signposting to other forms of travel support. However, we also anticipate that, if implemented, some changes may bring positive impacts to young people and their families, particularly with progressing and development of independent travel training and more flexibility through greater use of travel allowances.

Part A: Supporting independence and flexible travel arrangements

Enabling a young person to fulfil their potential can be greatly enhanced by supporting them to travel independently. The Council understands that each child or young person is an individual and that independence will look different for everyone. Many Councils have had significant success introducing alternative options to the traditional home collection and drop off travel arrangements. We are seeking feedback and views in relation to the following alternative travel options to understand how young people might benefit and the key characteristics that are required to increase uptake and successful use.

Equally, families have different circumstances, commitments and wishes that affect their daily lives – for instance work, caring responsibilities, a desire for their child to pursue extracurricular activities - that mean that the Council's home to school transport offer is not sufficiently flexible to meet their individual needs. For those families who need travel arrangements that accommodate these circumstances, the Council offers a travel allowance. This provides funding directly to parents and carers to make their own travel arrangements for their child. We are seeking feedback and views in relation to our travel allowance option to understand how families might benefit and the key characteristics that are required to increase uptake and successful use.

1. Independent Travel Training

Since 2006, Independent Travel Training (ITT) has been widely used by Councils across the UK as a means to promote a greater number of travel options for those students able to benefit from the training and with potential to travel independently. Surrey County Council's current Independent Travel Training programme has been in place since 2018 and forms an integral part of the existing travel assistance policies. Experience and evidence suggest that a successful ITT programme not only reduces the reliance on Council provided transport such as minibuses or taxis but also produces significant benefits for individuals, such as

- increased self-esteem and confidence,
- increased opportunities to use public transport as an individual or as a family at weekends, evenings and holidays
- improved access to services and activities
- reduced reliance on family members/friends to assist with travel needs

Analysis undertaken in other areas suggests that around 14% of users of home to school transport services would benefit from the training, with a high chance of success of becoming an independent traveller. However uptake of this travel training in Surrey is very low. The Council is

seeking feedback to understand the reasons for this and what would support young people to travel independently on public transport.

2. Use of Collection Points

In Surrey, most children and young people using Council arranged transport such as coaches, minibuses and taxis to access their school or college are collected from home. This can lengthen journey times for all children and young people as well as making route planning less efficient, less reliable and more costly. It also provides limited opportunities for young people to develop travel awareness skills and confidence that would benefit them in their lives. The use of collection points is often referred to as being “a step towards travel independence.”

The Council is seeking feedback to understand what are suitable arrangements for collection points and what barriers a child or young person might face in using one.

3. Travel Allowance

Under our existing travel and transport policies, the Council can provide funding directly to parents and carers to make their own travel arrangements for their eligible child or young person. The Council provides the allowance based on a banded model where the amount of funding depends on the distance between home and school. This option is available to families where this is more cost-effective than the Council providing transport. Currently, the allowance is set at:

Band	Distance between home – school (crow flies)	Total annual allowance
1	0 – 5 miles	£1,600
2	6 - 10 miles	£2,700
3	11 – 15 miles	£4,200
4	16+ miles	£5,000

Take up of the travel allowance has been very low. The Council is keen to encourage feedback through the consultation to explore how travel allowances could be used and funded to encourage greater uptake among parents and carers.

Part B: Review of discretionary provision

This part of the consultation document explores the current discretionary services which the Council provides beyond what it is legally required. Some of this provision is not ordinarily provided by other Councils. The Council acknowledges that families have benefited from this provision, however in light of the context and analysis set out in the Overview section of this document, we are obliged to consider options for change and seek feedback through this consultation. With each option, for transparency, we have set out the Council’s preferred option, however responses to the consultation will be considered before a final decision is taken.

The statutory duty to provide home to school transport

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their statutory school-aged children (5-16) attend school regularly and to make any necessary arrangements to ensure that they attend school.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to make suitable arrangements to provide free home to school transport for children of compulsory school age (aged 5-16) to the nearest suitable school for their home address who meet the qualifying distance criteria which are:

- 2 miles or more for children below the age of eight
- 3 miles or more for children aged eight and above

This duty applies to all children whether they have special educational needs or a disability or not. However, for those children who live under the qualifying distance and cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school accompanied by an adult because of their special needs or disability, they are entitled to free school transport regardless of the distance they live from school.

Transport for children below the age of 5

Proposed change to discretionary travel assistance

This section covers options Surrey County Council is considering for children under the statutory school age of five. The Council currently spends approximately £700,000 per year providing transport services for children under the age of five. This is discretionary provision.

The Council currently provides free home to school transport for a child who begins Reception as a four year old, where they would be eligible for this provision when they turn five. This can mean a child receives discretionary transport provision for up to a full academic year (for a child turning five in August). The Council's analysis indicates that this discretionary provision benefits approximately 200 children a year and costs approximately £680,000 a year.

Options under consideration and the Council's preferred option are:

Option 1: Surrey County Council will **cease** to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age.

Option 2: Surrey County Council will **continue** to provide free home to school transport to an infant or primary school for a child under the age of five, where a child is likely to be deemed as eligible once they turn five years of age.

The Council prefers to implement **Option 1** as this fulfils the Council's statutory responsibilities, implements travel arrangements that are predictable for the family and for which they can reasonably prepare and costs less.

For pre-school children with special educational needs attending a specialist unit at a special school early years class, a nursery in a mainstream school or a pre-school provision attached to a mainstream school, transport will not ordinarily be provided even if the distance criteria is met.

Harry is four years old and is beginning Reception class at his nearest suitable school in September. He lives 2.8 miles from the school. Under Option 1, he would not receive free home to school travel assistance until he turns five years old in March. Under Option 2, he would receive free home to school travel assistance from September.

Sienna is three years old and will attend a specialist nursery unit for pre-school children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in September. She lives 4.8 miles from the nursery. The Council would not ordinarily provide free home to school travel assistance for Sienna and would expect her parents or carers to make the necessary travel arrangements.

Provision for children of compulsory school age (5-16 years old)

Proposed change to discretionary travel assistance

The Council currently provides free home to school transport to the end of the academic year for a child who turns eight where the child has been eligible due to living more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from their nearest available school. This can mean a child receives discretionary transport provision for up to a full academic year (for a child turning eight in September). The Council's analysis indicates that this discretionary provision benefits approximately 80 children a year and costs approximately £80,000 a year.

Options under consideration and Council's preferred option are:

Option 3: Surrey County Council will **cease** to provide home to school transport at the end of the **term** in which a child turns 8 where the child has been eligible due to living more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from their nearest available school.

Option 4: Surrey County Council will **continue** to provide home to school travel assistance to the end of the **academic year** in which a child turns 8 where the child has been eligible due to living more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from their nearest available school.

The Council prefers to implement **Option 3** as this fulfils the Council's statutory responsibilities, implements travel arrangements that are predictable for the family and for which they can reasonably prepare and costs less.

Debbie is seven years old and beginning Year 3 at her nearest suitable school in September. She lives 2.5 miles from the school and receives free home to school transport. Debbie turns eight years old in November. Under Option 3, she would receive free home to school transport to the end of the first term in December. Under Option 4, she would continue to receive free home to school transport to the end of the academic year in July.

Transport for young people aged 17 – 18

Proposed change to discretionary travel assistance

This section covers options Surrey County Council is considering for young people over the compulsory school age of 16. The Council currently spends approximately £5 million per year providing transport services for young people with SEND over the age of 16, and a further £200,000 for young people without SEND over the age of 16. This is discretionary provision.

This period of education is an important time when young people are preparing for life beyond education and into adulthood. The SEND Code of Practice places a responsibility on Councils, education providers and families to support all young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood and develop independent life skills.

The ability to travel independently is an essential life skill. The Council expects that ordinarily young people over the age of 16 will use public transport, including cycling or walking, to attend their school or college.

Options under consideration and the Council's preferred option are:

Option 5: In line with its existing policies for post 16 home to school/college transport, the Council will **continue** to provide home to school/college travel assistance for young people ages 17-18 who meet the eligibility criteria under our existing policies. Students will be expected to travel by the most cost-effective means for which they are able which may be public transport or by way of a seat on a contract vehicle (coach, minibus or taxi) at the start and end of the normal school day. The provision of a travel allowance where the parent, carer or young person uses a private vehicle will only be agreed where this is the least expensive option.

The eligibility criteria are that young people are aged between 16 and 19 years old, attending a school or college in which the shortest walking distance is over three miles from the student's house, the course they are attending is full-time and is not available at a nearer school or college, **and:**

- they are in receipt of the 16 to 19 vulnerable student bursary, **or**
- their families are in receipt of the maximum Working Tax Credit, **or**
- they meet the eligibility criteria for free school meals, **or**
- they are unable to use the Student Fare Card or 16-17 Saver because their sixth form or college is not on a public transport route for which the Student Fare Card or 16-17 Saver applies, or if they cannot reasonably access such a route from their home address, **or**
- they have a disability and/or have learning difficulties and/or are medically ill and will incur extra transport costs to travel to school/college as a result of that disability or condition.

Further details are available on the Council's website: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/transport/16-plus/help-with-the-cost-of-travelling>

The Council will **continue** to charge a financial contribution for this provision.

Option 6: In line with statutory responsibilities, to **cease** to provide ordinarily home to school/college travel assistance for young people ages 17 -18. The Council would **continue** to promote the use of the Student Fare Card Scheme, 16-17 Saver and Disabled Person's Bus Pass Scheme, which offer discounted travel on bus and rail services, to all post 16 year old students.

The Council's preferred option is **Option 6** as this fulfils the Council's statutory responsibilities, implements travel arrangements that are predictable for the family and young person and for which they can reasonably prepare and costs less than Option 5.

Lyle is 17 years old and is beginning a full-time sixth form course at a college that is his nearest appropriate college offering his chosen course. The college is located 4.5 from the student's home address. His family are middle income earners and he has no special educational needs or medical/mobility difficulties. Under both options, Lyle would be expected to take advantage of the Student Fare Card Scheme or 16-17 Saver that provides discounted travel on buses and trains for journeys to and from college.

Moses is 17 years old, has an Education, Health and Care Plan and is beginning a full-time sixth form course at a specialist school for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The school is located 5.5 miles from the student's home address and is the nearest suitable school. Moses would be expected in first instance to take advantage of either the Surrey Student Fare Card, the 16-17 Saver or the Disabled Person's Bus Pass to travel to and from school.

Under Option 5, Moses could apply for travel assistance. If eligible, he could receive a seat on a contracted vehicle such as a coach or minibus. There would be a financial charge for this. Under Option 6, Moses would not ordinarily be eligible for travel assistance.

Jac is 18 years old and is beginning a full-time sixth form course at a college that is their nearest appropriate college offering their chosen course. The college is located 3.2 from the student's home address. Their family are low income and Jac has no special educational needs or medical/mobility difficulties. Jac would be expected in first instance to take advantage of the Surrey Student Fare Card to travel to and from college.

Under Option 5, Jac could apply for travel assistance. If eligible, they could receive a seat on a contracted vehicle such as a coach or minibus. There would be a financial charge for this. Under Option 6, Jac would not ordinarily be eligible for travel assistance.

19 – 25 year old transport for young adults with special educational needs and disabilities

This section covers the Council's provision for young adults over the age of 18 with special educational needs and disabilities. With the exception of those pupils where the Council determines it is necessary for it to arrange transport to enable the pupils to get to and from school or college, the provision of home to school transport for young adults over the age of 18 is discretionary.

As for young people aged 17 and 18, the SEND Code of Practice places a responsibility on Councils, education providers and families to support all young adults with SEND to prepare for adulthood and develop independent life skills. The ability to travel independently is an essential life skill. The Council expects that ordinarily young adults with SEND over the age of 18 will use public transport, including cycling or walking, to attend their school or college.

For young adults with special educational needs over the age of 18 attending an educational setting, travel assistance will not ordinarily be provided by the Council even if the distance criteria is met. The exception is those pupils where the Council determines it is necessary for it to arrange transport to enable the pupils to get to and from school or college. This is likely to be a small number of pupils.

Part C: Provision

This section sets out some of the operational standards that we will follow in delivering our statutory responsibilities for home to school transport. We want to make this transparent for all parents and carers in particular so that they understand how the service operates.

In setting out these standards, the Council will consider eligibility on a case by case basis.

1. Provision of contracted transport vehicles (coaches, buses, minibuses and taxis)

When a child is entitled to home to school transport under the Council's policy, the Council will provide suitable transport and seek to ensure this is cost effective. The transport provided may take the form of a bus pass, train pass, seat on a contract vehicle, for instance a hired coach, a minibus or shared taxi. A travel allowance can also be provided where requested by parents or carers and where it is more cost effective.

2. Independent travel training

Travel training helps students become more independent and confident in their everyday lives and gives them skills for life. Council officers, schools and parents or carers may refer children who are eligible for home to school transport for assessment of their ability to undertake training, where public transport or walking would be the most cost effective form of transport.

3. Travel allowance

Where a child is entitled to transport, the Council can provide a travel allowance for parents or carers to take their children to and from school, or make other appropriate arrangements such as a relative taking their child to and from school, where it is more cost effective than providing contracted or arranged transport. The Council is consulting on the level of travel allowance and as set out in the consultation above.

4. Provision of transport for part-time hours

In accordance with statutory guidance, home to school transport will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of transport for part-time hours does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided. Schools and parents and carers should take this into account when bespoke hours are being set for a child. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

5. Provision of transport for after school activities

In accordance with statutory guidance, home to school transport will only be provided at the start and finish of the normal school or college day. The provision of transport for non-statutory education or clubs does not fall within local authorities' statutory duties and will not be provided. Parents are expected to make travel arrangements for their children in these circumstances. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

6. Home address

In accordance with statutory guidance, home to school transport will only be provided from and to a single address at which the child or young person is habitually resident. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

7. Pick up and drop off timing

Routes to and from school and pick-up and drop-off times are planned by the transport provider to be as efficient as possible for all students traveling on the vehicle. Because of this, it is not possible to accommodate the individual circumstances of each family, such as work commitments or taking other children to and from school. Where families wish to have more flexible travel arrangements, a travel allowance can be requested.

8. Collection points

The Council will promote the use of collection points as an alternative to home doorstep collection and drop off as this enables more efficient route planning, lessening journey times for all children and young people as well as making the service more reliable. It provides opportunities for young people to develop travel awareness skills and confidence. The Council is consulting on what are suitable arrangements for collection points.

9. Journey length

As a general guide, the Council will aim for the maximum journey time of 45 minutes for a child of primary school age, and 75 minutes for a child of secondary school age. It is recognised that this may not always be possible, particularly in rural areas. Journeys for children with special educational needs and disabilities travelling long distances to schools are likely to have longer journey times.

10. Dual and link placements, inclusion and pupil referral units

Dual placements are where a child or young person attends more than one school or where a school arranges a college link placement for a pupil. Dual placements may require additional transport assistance, such as transport at earlier or later times of during the school day. Schools are responsible for arranging and paying for the cost of such transport. Where a pupil is on the roll at one school but visits another school for inclusion or link purposes, the school where the pupil is usually based will be responsible for arranging and paying for transport. These arrangements also apply to pupil referral units.

11. Passenger assistants

Passenger assistants (escorts) are not automatically provided. In considering whether a route needs a passenger assistant, the Council generally takes account of the following:

- A child's medical needs, particularly where rescue medication is required.
- Where an individual child's needs create a clear danger or health and safety risk to themselves and other passengers on the vehicle.
- Where the number of children travelling together necessitates the provision of a passenger assistant to help manage a group children and their specific support needs on the journey.

Passenger assistants for SEND purposes are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Provision of a passenger assistants at any one time does not guarantee that this will be an ongoing arrangement; the requirement can be reassessed at any time in the academic year, and in the event of any change in circumstances.

12. Shared travel

Ordinarily children and young people travelling to and from school or college will be expected to share their transport with other children or young people. This promotes integration and independence, social skills as well as being more environmentally sustainable and cost effective. Conversely, travelling on their own may lead to social isolation of a young person and a delay in development of essential social behaviours and skills. It also impacts on an individual's ability to access other forms of travel and to travel with others.

Where arrangements are made for a child or young person to travel on their own, due to for instance medical reasons, this should not be seen as a permanent arrangement. The Council will review these arrangements on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain in the best interests of the child or young person.

13. Behaviour of children on transport

Children, parents, carers, schools, transport operators and the Council all have a role to play in ensuring the appropriate behaviour of children on school transport.

While passenger assistants have a responsibility for safeguarding children and maintaining behavioural standards on the vehicle during the course of the journey, schools will take whatever steps possible to ensure the appropriate behaviour of their students on home to school transport; and will take appropriate action should incidents of poor behaviour be reported. Appropriate action may include the use of sanctions, written warnings and exclusion from transport. Parents are also expected to take responsibility for their child's behaviour while travelling.

Where a child's behaviour is directly as a result of a known and diagnosed medical condition and it is agreed by medical advisors and teachers that the child has no control over their behaviour, the Council will undertake a risk assessment and will consider making alternative arrangements, for example, providing the parent or carer with a mileage allowance or direct payments to make their child's own travel arrangements.

The Council recognises that general poor behaviour, not directly attributable to a child's particular special educational needs and circumstances, cannot be taken into account when determining an appropriate safe travel plan. The Council will expect clear standards of acceptable behaviour in the interests of ensuring a safe journey for all pupils and staff as well as other road users.

Reasonable adjustments will be made in cases where behaviour problems persist and it is judged that the safety of the other passengers is endangered. Where reasonable adjustments cannot be made to deal with behaviour, transport can be withdrawn in individual cases and the Council will provide resources for parents to make alternative travel arrangements.

In consultation with schools, the Council may instigate permanent or fixed periods of exclusion from transport. Parents or carers will be responsible for transporting their children during any period of exclusion and ensuring their child's regular attendance at school.

14. Parental choice

Where a parent or carer has decided that they do not wish for their child to go to the school or college that the Council has decided can meet the student's needs and decides to seek a placement at an alternative setting further away, transport will not be provided. The implications of transporting their son/daughter to a setting other than the school that has been assessed as the nearest school that can meet a child's needs should be considered and alternative travel arrangements should be made.

15. Exceptional circumstances

Recognising that the Council's discretionary powers should not be unreasonably fettered by its general policy, the Council will consider and may agree a request for home to school transport where there are considered to be exceptional circumstances. The overriding expectation is that parents should undertake their legal responsibility to get their child(ren) to and from school and as such the Council will need to be satisfied that the parent has demonstrated why they, for social, medical, financial or personal reasons cannot undertake this duty.

The determination will be based on evidence received to support the case whether transport is necessary in order for the child to receive an education. Consideration will be given as to whether the circumstances could have reasonably been foreseen by the parent or carer. For example, moving to a temporary accommodation owing to flood damage cannot be foreseen, whereas choosing a school other than a child's nearest school and realising following this decision that transport is not available could be foreseen.

16. Applying for transport

Parents and carers should be aware that it can take some time to arrange transport and are advised to apply as soon as they know that they require transport for their child, if they believe the child meets the eligibility criteria.

How to respond

Please read the consultation document before answering any questions on the survey. We would prefer responses to come in via the online survey where at all possible. The consultation and survey is available online at: <https://www.surreysays.co.uk>

If any respondent requires a hard copy of either the consultation document and/or survey, then you can request this by calling 0300 200 1004.

The deadline for all responses, including any hard copy responses, is 8 December 2019.