

Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team

Summer Bulletin (2024)

The Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team arranges travel assistance for around 10,500 children and young people, including 5,181 who hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

We are providing an update on our programme of works this year, as well as an update on the progress of the summer review, where we review all travel arrangements for all eligible children and young people (CYP) and work towards ensuring that newly eligible CYP are awarded their arrangements in good time before the start of term.

Travel arrangements for September

→ Meeting our deadline

Earlier this year, we worked with Family Voice Surrey to set a deadline that all families who had applied for travel assistance before the 31 July would receive confirmation of their travel arrangements 7 days before the start of term. The Team received 1480 applications on behalf of children aged between 4 and 16 up to the end of July.

As of Friday, the 23 August, 100% of families who applied by the 31 July and who were deemed eligible for travel assistance had received notification of their specific arrangements for September, with some families being informed that their assigned transport operator will contact them in advance of the start of term.

While we understand that in some cases, families may be unhappy with the specific arrangements determined, it is an important milestone for the Council to meet this deadline, which is a significant improvement on last year where families were waiting close to the start of term for their arrangements to be communicated.

→ August

While we advised that travel arrangements would not be in place for eligible families who applied in August, we are trying to inform these families of their transport solutions where possible. We have so far received around 150 requests for travel this month and are working hard to ensure that arrangements are in place.

If you would like to contact the Service about your arrangements, please submit an [online enquiry form](#).

Discretionary travel update

→ Children under 5 and children/young people aged 16 to 25.

We appreciate that the Council's adoption of a more robust assessment and eligibility process around discretionary travel assistance has resulted in a challenging spring and summer for some families. We remain committed to ensuring children and young people in Surrey, who are most in need of travel support, get the help they need to access their education settings, particularly against a backdrop of increasing pressure on Local Authority finances, both locally and nationally.

In terms of our assessment work this year, around 450+ families are due to have a discretionary travel solution provided for their children by the Council from September 2024.

→ Under 5s

We are continuing to review travel requests for children aged 4 and have agreed travel assistance in cases where exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated.

For further information about our approach to the assessment of travel eligibility for children aged 5, please visit [Travel assistance Surrey Local Offer](#).

→ Post-16 (16-19 and 19-25)

Where an application for travel assistance has been refused, we are offering independent travel training (ITT) as a package of support. For further information on ITT, including our self-referral form, visit [Travel Choices \(surrey.gov.uk\)](#).

You can also apply for a [Concessionary Seat \(surrey.gov.uk\)](#).

Appeals

We are currently dealing with a high number of stage one appeals, and we are continuing to ensure that all stage one appeal outcomes are issued on-time, within 20 working days. Each request is considered on a case-by-case basis.

50% of stage one post-16 appeals for discretionary travel assistance have been upheld this year based on evidence of exceptional circumstances, with a discretionary travel solution offered.

Developments

→ Communications

We realise that in some cases, guidance relating to travel assistance is not provided early enough in the process of securing a school or college.

Our Under 16's Parent Carer Guide, co-produced with Family Voice Surrey, has been in circulation since the beginning of July and we have heard good feedback from families, highlighting that this guidance is long overdue to support families in shaping their understanding of transport.

[Parent guide to travel assistance \(surreylocaloffer.org.uk\)](https://surreylocaloffer.org.uk)

For Key Stage Transfer 2025, we are producing specific guidance for parents/carers in key areas, including under 5 eligibility and post-16. We're aiming for this guidance to be circulated to families this autumn, well in advance of the 15 February and 31 March deadline for the issuing of a final Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

→ **Independent Travel Training**

We are looking at integrating travel training opportunities into our discussions with SEND colleagues (e.g. at the annual review, and for decisions around placement), while also increasing the visibility of travel training through a promotional video with young people who have been trained. This work will be undertaken during the autumn.

System updates

→ **Mandatory training**

We have rolled out mandatory training for colleagues in SEND, which cover a number of themes relating to travel assistance, from eligibility through to travel delivery. This forms part of the strategy of developing a closer working relationship in areas such as communications and decision-making, equipping colleagues with knowledge of the travel landscape to better inform their conversations with families.

→ **New application form**

This autumn will see the introduction of the new application form for children aged under 16. The form will include an eligibility checker, providing a provisional assessment outcome. It will be a lot shorter and quicker to complete. We will also be developing an improved post-16 application form.

Contacting the Surrey School Travel and Assessment Team

If you feel that you would benefit from a 1 to 1 call with a member of the SSTAT, the engagement sessions are running until the end of August.

From September, you will still be able to contact the Team and we may be able to speak with you directly depending on the circumstances of your enquiry.

Please submit an [online enquiry form](#).

Remember to select the option requesting a call back from a member of the SSTAT.

Updated August 2024

Our next bulletin update is planned for the second half of the 2024 Autumn term.