

# Family Voice Recommendations

## Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team

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| Family Voice Recommendations to Surrey School Travel & Assessment team following the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 |   |                     |                  |
| Family Voice card number 006, Project SEND Transport   |   |                     |                  |
| Date shared; Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2024   |   |                     |                  |
| <b>Surrey County Council</b>   | Gerry Hughes<br>Assistant Director – Support Services | <b>Family Voice</b> | Leanne Henderson |

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| <b>1</b> | <p><b>Family Voice:</b> To have a clear and robust roadmap of how the current application/assessment and delivery processes are going to be significantly changed to ensure that families are not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Left without transport at the start of term</li> <li>- That families are given a fair and timely decision</li> <li>- That families have regular communication and updates throughout the process at different stages of the year.</li> <li>- That families are given clear and consistent information about the specific transport arrangements at least 7 days before the start of term so that they can prepare their child or young person.</li> </ul> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/> All applications for transport are assessed and if eligibility is met the team will work on finding the most suitable and cost-effective method of transport for the individual, working within the statutory guidance and Surrey County Councils policy giving a fair and consistent approach. Communication will continue to be a focus for the team and will continue to work in bridging the gap where families may feel communication is limited. We will be utilising our website FAQ's section providing regular updates and addressing any trends that might be appearing in our data and demands coming into the service. We saw great success with the introduction on the .gov service where we can tailor communication via text &amp; email to our families and will be looking to utilise this further as the academic year develops.</p> <p>Current and up to date information within the 'parent guide' will continue to aid parents and carers during the application and eligibility process. The introduction of our Operators guide (early spring) will also help parents &amp; carers understand the next steps once eligibility has been approved.</p> <p>Notification will be given to families 7 days prior to the start of term to advise of travel arrangement for the academic year where applications are received by the 31<sup>st</sup> July. For all applications received after the 31<sup>st</sup> July the team will offer ITAs/PTBs in the first instance and will do there utmost to agree contracted transport where possible 7 days prior to the start of term.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b></p> |
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Communication remains a high priority for the team, a full review of how we communicate to our families and carers, internal partners and key stakeholders has been undertaken and a schedule has been created to identify the services key activities. We have a working document that holds the services key activity along with a quick reference sheet that will be shared internally to support this.

A full review of our 'bulk' letter templates and auto responses has been underway and is now in its final stages. A clear sign off process has been established for these 'bulk' communications considering the language and formats used, giving a uniformed and consistent approach which will be reviewed throughout the academic year. Our auto responses, where required, will be scheduled to change to ensure correct messages are shared at the correct time of the academic year.

Following the success of the parent guide in 2022/23 we are continuing to work with yourselves, Family Voice, to reflect feedback and operational changes to ensure this document is up to date and available to all families.

The FAQs are regularly reviewed and updated to support the demand coming into the service.

Where possible we are using a visual to demonstrate the application and delivery process families will go through when requesting travel assistance.

### *Travel arrangements starting in September*

You should have received confirmation that your child is eligible for travel assistance via an automated email confirming eligibility.

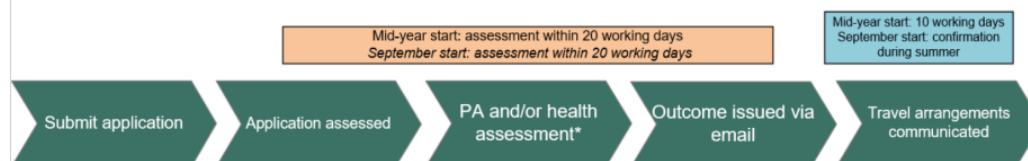
Depending on when you receive notification that your application has been deemed eligible for travel assistance, you may not hear from us again until we confirm your travel arrangements. This is because we normally start the process for reviewing all existing and new transport routes during the summer term and into the summer holidays. The review normally concludes towards the end of August. If you apply in the spring, please be assured that you will hear from us during the summer.

If you submitted your application before the 31 July, your travel arrangements will be communicated (operator and pick-up day) at the latest, 7 days before the start of the autumn term.

### *Travel arrangements to start as soon as possible (during the academic year)*

We aim to ensure that travel arrangements are confirmed within 10 working days of an eligible outcome issued.

Below is an example of what our assessment and delivery process looks like:



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| <b>2</b> | <p>Family Voice: To have a robust communication process which should include a central one point of contact email address and telephone number that parents can contact the transport team on.</p> <p>There should be clear timescales of when parents will receive a response. (e.g. 48 hours for a call back and 5 working days for an email) This information should be on the automated email response, displayed on the website and be on all communication sent out to parents.</p> <p>There should also be a clear escalation route included in this information should a response not be received within the specified timescales. There should also be a separate safeguarding contact method that can be used in situations where an urgent response is required. (More details on this are in point 3)</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>         Our online enquiry form can be completed as per the link in which we aim to respond within 5 working days <a href="https://www.surreycc.gov.uk">Home to school enquiry - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)</a><br/>         Telephone contact can be made via our Contact Centre on - 0300 200 1004, these lines are open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday and will be able to support and direct your calls appropriately. The SLA on call backs is 24 hours and may be adjusted during peak periods.</p> <p>A review will take place to ensure all timescales are clearly noted on our website, auto responses, within the parent and operational guides and with our contact centre teams.</p> <p>Within the online enquiry form there is the option to select a safeguarding concern where we encourage parent / carer to log any concerns they may have here or to call the contact centre as detailed above. Both routes are marked as a priority and would be dealt with as a matter of urgency by the teams within 24 hours.</p> <p>Within our FAQs we will add in a Safeguarding section to highlight where a parent / carer can raise any concerns they may have. Within the operational guide there will also be a section dedicated to safeguarding.</p> <p>The SST&amp;A team work with all colleagues, partners and families on all safeguarding concern and follow a robust process.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>         Within the first page of the online enquiry form we have clearly stated that we aim to respond within 5 working days, unless it is a safeguarding, incident, or accident report, in which case we will respond to you as a matter of urgency.<br/> <a href="https://www.surreycc.gov.uk">Home to school enquiry - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Telephone contact can be made via our Contact Centre on - 0300 200 1004, these lines are open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. The team work from a 'live' call back sheet and aim to respond with a call back in 24 hours. This may be adjusted during peak periods and will be communicated to the caller to manage their expectations.</p> <p>Our online enquiry form includes the option to select a safeguarding concern, we encourage parents/carers to log any concerns they may have here or to call the Contact Centre as detailed</p> |
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|                 | <p>above. Both methods of contact are marked as a priority and will be dealt with as a matter of urgency by the teams within 24 hours.</p> <p>Our online enquiry form is utilised well and sees a steady flow of traffic throughout the year which naturally peaks in August and September. The most common enquiry received is around asking when the transport will be in place. Further work will be done during the summer to ensure the website and link to the enquiry form clearly shows dates of when families will be notified of travel assistance.</p>  |
| <p><b>3</b></p> | <p><b>Family Voice:</b> To have a clear and transparent information available to families about the training and safeguarding checks drivers receive prior to driving children. This should also detail refresher training and checks</p> <p>A clear and transparent process of how to report concerns about drivers or PA's or incidents with other children and the process that follows this. This should include clear timescales and how to escalate if this is not followed.</p> <p>Clear steps and guidance on measures to keep children safe to include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car seats</li> <li>• Drivers use of mobile phones</li> <li>• Seatbelts</li> <li>• Information about a child passed to the driver</li> </ul> <p>To implement a safeguarding contact line that parent carers and schools can report urgent safeguarding concerns about transport (driver or other occupants) These concerns should be responded to within 24 hours and dealt within 5 working days depending on the level of risk. Guidance should be put together to demonstrate how parents and carers and schools will be kept up to date and the process they will follow.</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b></p> <p>Within the new operational guide which will be launched early Spring there will be a dedicated section for all driver training and the vetting process Surrey County Council ensures all drivers and companies undertake. Review of our website pages will be undertaken to include this information.</p> <p>Driver manifests are created for each route and the operator has a duty to review and share this with their drivers based on the information parents and carers share with the SST&amp;A team during the application process.</p> <p>Within the online enquiry form there is the option to raise a safeguarding concern, as above we will enhance this by adding into our FAQs. Our contact centre can take initial calls for any safeguarding concerns (which will be responded to within 24 hours). The SST&amp;A team continue to work with educational settings sharing information around behaviour or incidents that may have happened during the school day that could have an influence on the child or young person's journey.</p> |

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|                 | <p>They also maintain a regular audit on school (and contractor's) premises of badges and other contractual obligations and follow a contract management process to formally raise any concerns with operators.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>Within our operational guide that will be launched in April we have included a section on our service standards. Here we detail that all Surrey County Councils contracted drivers and PA's must carry authorised ID badges which include Enhanced DBS Disclosure and additional checks, a parent, carer, educational setting can ask to view this at any time.</p> <p>All drivers and PAs will undertake Safeguarding training prior to their badges being issued. They will then undergo further Safeguarding and Disability Awareness training as soon as possible and within the first year of service.</p> <p>Our teams take safeguarding and allegations extremely seriously and will work with the families, educational settings, and operators to ensure measures are put in place to support the pupil and address the situation in a timely manner.</p>  |
| <p><b>4</b></p> | <p><b>Family Voice:</b> To develop a robust process where SEND, Admissions and transport work together and communicate effectively to ensure the experience for the family is joined up and seamless journey.</p> <p>This should include journey times being factored into placement decisions and communicated with the transport team at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b> This continues to remain a key focus for the SST&amp;A team. Attendance at key transfer meetings, utilising our MS Teams chats and building on working relationships within the SEN teams will help support this. A review is underway of training material the SST&amp;A team can provide the SEN teams to help support and educate the decisions made prior to transport being requested as well as the attendance at SEND Strategic Leadership Meeting to support decision making.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>We continue to work with our colleagues across SEND and admissions and attend key meetings to ensure we are included earlier in conversations and that Transport is a consideration.</p> <p>Working with our colleagues within Analytics is supporting the timeliness of sharing information which is helping to support the SST&amp;AT to schedule in work and prepare for future weeks / months. This will continue to build as we approach our busier period.</p> <p>Training regarding Travel assistance has been developed and is in the process of being uploaded to our online training portal and will be mandatory for all SEN case workers to undertake. This will help to educate workers of the transport process, our statutory duties, and processes that we adhere to within the service.</p> |

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| 5 | <p><b>Family Voice:</b> To have clear guidance on how you intend to adhere to the recommended statutory timescales (max journey of 45 mins for primary and max 75 mins for secondary) whenever possible, and assurance that these times won't be exceeded by adding too many children to a route.</p> <p>This should include journey times being factored into placement decisions and communicated with the transport team at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b> The SST&amp;A team contract routes to adhere to the statutory timescales based on the route planning software available to the service. Work is underway to understand what the market has to offer and the benefits this could have to Surrey County Council, further development and updates will be shared in due course.</p> <p>Transport operators and families are asked to raise concerns regarding journey times with colleagues in the Contracts and Control Hub of the SST&amp;A team. We will continue to monitor this carefully as our data and information systems improve.</p> <p>The team continue to work with families and transport providers when times are exceeded which are sometimes out of the providers control (road works, traffic congestion, weather conditions, loading and unloading of passengers etc) Where the SST&amp;A team are made aware of these situations work is done in a timely manner to provide alternative solutions.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>Routes continue to be planned, supporting statutory timescales, with the planning software we have available to us.</p> <p>We are imminently due the outcomes and recommendations on our current system and market offering following a piece of work being undertaken by our colleagues within Freedom to Travel. This will give us a greater understanding of the market offering and how we may be able to enhance our current system.</p> <p>During the summer / autumn term we will be scoping out the requirements for an operator's portal. We feel this functionality will be beneficial in supporting operational needs, improvement to the service, provide greater transparency, creating an opportunity to share information in a timely manner and support with route timescales. As this project develops, we will be able to provide more detail.</p> <p>We continue to work with families, educational settings, and operators to provide us with feedback on journey times and where timescales have been exceeded and a review will be undertaken. Consideration is taken to outside influences such as road works, traffic congestion, weather conditions, loading and unloading of passengers etc. All concerns raised are dealt with in a timely manner to provide alternative solutions where appropriate.</p> <p>We continue to monitor this carefully as our data and information systems improve.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Information should be readily available to families about what to do in the instance that the child's driver changes suddenly or frequently.</p>   |

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|   | <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should happen if there are changes</li> <li>• How should changes be communicated to families (by who and within what timescales)</li> <li>• What to do if there are frequent changes</li> <li>• How to escalate concerns or request a change</li> </ul> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b> Within the FAQs on the website, a section will be added around what the process is should your driver change, which will also be included within the Parent and operational guide.</p> <p>The transport provider should be communicating any changes directly with the families, if this is not happening then we'd ask that the SST&amp;A team are notified. A reiteration of this can be shared with our transport providers via our suppliers newsletter.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b><br/>Where possible for existing passengers who access their educational settings via contracted transport, where possible, transport will be the same or similar. There will be occasions where we will need to change a service, or where arrangements may change.</p> <p>An example of these changes could be due to; more pupils being awarded transport to a specific educational setting and are added to a specific vehicle/route, the operator of the current route changes, the type of vehicle changes, a journey time is increased due to more children in a vehicle or the home pick-up and drop off times change. Please note this is not an extensive list and could be other factors that lead to a change in operator, vehicle, or driver. Any changes will be ordinarily communicated by the existing or new travel provider.</p> <p>We also ask that there is any change to the pupil's medical needs that notification is given to SSC as soon as possible by phone or via the online enquiry form. An updated copy of the Care Plan will need to be submitted so that if we need to alter the travel provision, we can be confident that we have all the information needed to do so.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Initiate a working party to ensure that children accessing alternative provision or EOTAS have transport in place this will ensure children who are receiving this type of provision are able to attend their education setting and receive the education they are entitled to without unnecessary delays. (Explore ITA's, SEND team budget, who is responsible)</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b> A full review is currently underway for this along with ALPs and we will be sharing some communication on this in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Our initial proposals are that in cases where an EOTAS package is agreed by colleagues in SEND with a family, a Personal Travel Budget will be included by the Authority as part of the package to support children and young people to access their learning placements.</p>   |

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|   | <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b></p> <p>We have approached the review of how we assess and delivery travel solutions to our Alternative Learning Placements (ALPs) by engaging with both the operational SEND teams and through a consultation process which was set up for the provisions themselves. We have identified a number of inconsistencies with the existing process which escalated over time due to little oversight of the process, from the assessment of eligibility through to the type of travel assistance agreed and put in place.</p> <p>Through this review, and in an attempt to improve the consistency of decision-making, we have provided clarity on circumstances where travel assistance is provided and instances where the Authority will not provide it.</p> <p>Discussions with the operational teams have now been complete and a new framework has been agreed which has now been introduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Discussion with the ALPS and consultative meeting taken place to outline the process. Eligible children can utilise transport at the start and end of the school day.</li> <li>➤ Exam timetables – some transport will be available for the start, middle and end of the school day. Some provisions will make their own arrangements for pupils to go home after the end of the exams that fall outside of this.</li> <li>➤ In discussion some units will transition more slowly to change transport arrangements at the start of the new academic year.</li> <li>➤ A2E packages that are not named in the EHCP and consequently pupils will not be eligible for travel assistance, it is suggested that the Case Officer has the initial conversation around getting that child to the agreed placement as it is parental responsibility. This should be the first discussion point.</li> <li>➤ However, it is also acknowledged that this may be a challenge, and to ensure we meet our Section 19 obligations we may offer a personal travel budget (PTB) by way of support to the families to get their children to and from those provisions.</li> <li>➤ Transport will only be provided with families who have extenuating circumstances.</li> </ul> |
| 8 | <p>To have preparation for adulthood in mind for all young people and ensure families are aware of the independent travel training offer and can consider this for their young person where appropriate. To look at existing public transport routes and commission more routes to enable young people to travel independently if they are able to.</p> <p><b>December 2023 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b> Surrey County Council will continue to promote independent travel training and remains a focus within the SST&amp;A team as an alternative travel solution. Work is underway in redesigning our communication and literature to share with our Children, young persons, parents and carers and schools to bring ITT to life a little more via the website and utilise case studies to demonstrate the success stories we've seen.</p> <p><b>April 2024 - Surrey School Travel &amp; Assessment Team:</b></p>  |



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Independent travel training (ITT) remains a key focus as a travel assistance offering. Training has been developed for the team at the point of eligibility to see if ITT would be a suitable offering. Conversations are starting earlier with families around suitability along with access to public transport links to support the requirement for the pupil.

We recently launched an online self-referral form which was sign posted in a recent communication piece sent to our year 10 & 11 cohort. Please follow this link to the self-referral form [Independent Travel Training self-referral - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#).

We continue to work with our colleagues from Surrey Choices to help promote this offering and hope to gain some further insight from our colleagues within the Youth Participation Group on how this offering is perceived by young people and how they might be able to help us in driving this offering forward.