

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for Changing the Application Process for Travel Assistance to an Online Form

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:

Change to an existing strategy or policy

Change to a service or function

A new strategy or policy

A new service or function

Other

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

As of September 2024, the Surrey School Travel & Assessment team provide travel assistance to 9,911 pupils within Surrey. The level of applications received into the service during 2023/24 reached a record 5,691 new applications.

We are planning to introduce a new public-facing application form, replacing the existing online application form that has been in-place since the spring of 2020. This change is intended to streamline the process of application for families by reducing unnecessary questions and by providing an provisional eligibility outcome, while improving accessibility with insights from families who we spoke with during the summer of 2023. An additional aim is to reduce officer time spent assessing applications through automation capabilities linked to providing outcomes earlier.

The scope covers all families applying for travel assistance, including those with childrharavap16480(37)

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Use of data or evidence

During the spring and summer of 2023, we worked with colleagues in the Digital Discovery Team as part of a project to redesign the current application form. Part of the redesign involved user engagement with a number of families whose children are currently assigned travel assistance and thus, had used the existing form when applying for free travel.

needs, and tap into real customer quotations to ensure success and adoption of the new application process.

qualitative examples of challenges that families faced with the current form.

While the focus of the project was a new front-end Under 16 years application form, the user

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

Journeys across the county are easier, more predictable, and safer

Well connected communities, with effective infrastructure, that grow sustainably

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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. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

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).

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)

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

1.

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2.Disability

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

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Ensure applicants with disabilities can easily access contact information for support, including phone numbers, email addresses, or chat support. Make sure that this information is prominently displayed throughout the application process.

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?

Individuals with disabilities may have limited access to the technology required to complete online applications. While providing alternative methods (like paper forms) can help, some individuals may still be at a disadvantage if they cannot access the required technology or support.

Not all individuals with disabilities possess the same level of digital literacy, which can create barriers when using online forms. While training and support can be provided, there will always be individuals who lack the skills or confidence to engage with digital platforms.

The shift to an online process may exacerbate anxiety or stress for some individuals, particularly those with cognitive impairments or mental health challenges. Although support can be offered, those who experience significant anxiety may still struggle, regardless of the assistance available.

The online process may require individuals to advocate for themselves more than they would in a traditional, in-person process. Providing support channels can help, but not all individuals may recognise when they need assistance or feel empowered to seek help.

Individuals from diverse backgrounds may find online applications difficult to navigate due to language or cultural differences. While offering multilingual support is beneficial, it may not fully address the nuances of cultural contexts or varying literacy levels.

Systemic inequalities related to disability and socioeconomic status may persist despite changes to the application process. Addressing these larger societal issues often requires interventions beyond the scope of the travel assistance application.

Individuals with disabilities may have heightened concerns about the privacy and security of their sensitive personal information when applying online. While security measures can be enhanced, the inherent risks associated with online data collection can never be completely eliminated.

3. Race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality

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Staff members for whom English is not their first language may experience difficulties with navigating or understanding the online system if it is only available in English.

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

Offer translation assistance for key areas of the application process. Ensure that staff can access language support or resources to help them navigate the platform if necessary

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 _____ and explain why, together with evidence.

Pregnancy and Maternity

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

Staff who are on maternity leave or pregnant may require additional support if the system is rolled out while they are on leave or transitioning back to work.

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

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Provide training and a clear communication plan to ensure staff on maternity leave are aware of the new system and feel supported when returning to work. Offer catch-up sessions or individual training for those returning from leave.

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 _____ and explain why, together with evidence.

5. Action plan and monitoring arrangements

Action plan and reviewing

The average work cycle for the travel and assessment team runs all calendar year, with a peak between February and November. If the form is introduced to families in January, leading up to increase in volume from mid-February, we would like to review its impact towards the end of the year in 2025, after a full cycle of use with an anticipated use-rate of around 5,000 applications submitted. We will develop an audit framework to be used during the review, and it will include questioning in the annual survey of 2025.

Involve the Assessment Team in monitoring progress against the actions above.

Item	Initiation Date	Action/Item	Person Actioning	Target Completion Date	Update/Notes	Open/Closed
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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