



Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Passenger Transport Dynamic Purchasing System
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
<p>Under the 1996 Education Act, Southampton City Council has a statutory duty to provide free of charge travel arrangements to facilitate the attendance at school of eligible children within the Council’s administrative boundary. The Education Act 1996 requires that travel support is provided to children of compulsory school age who attend their nearest suitable school and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • live more than the statutory walking distance from that school, or • could not reasonably be expected to walk to that school because of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem, even if they were accompanied by their parent, or • would not be able to walk to that school in reasonable safety, even if they were accompanied by their parent, or • meet the ‘extended rights’ criteria for children from low-income households. <p>The Council’s School Travel Policy also includes a statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of travel support or other support to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age and adult learners (over the age of 19 and under the age of 25) receiving education or training (including those with and Education, Health and Care plan). There is no legal requirement to provide travel assistance to Early Years children, post-16 students or adult learners. However, local authorities must adhere to the statutory guidance on post-16 transport and the Equalities Act 2010 when developing school travel policy and publishing school travel policy statements for Early Years children, post-16 students and adult learners.</p>	

There are currently approximately 500 mainstream children and 1,100 SEND children for whom the Council provides travel support and approximately 1,080 children that receive school travel support by taxi or minibus provided by external transport operators.

The transport operators are procured via a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) which is a mechanism to enable transport operators to sign up to a set of terms and conditions that enables them to bid on transport provision tenders and be awarded school transport (taxi / minibus) contracts.

Summary of Impact and Issues

The existing Passenger Transport DPS has exceeded the aggregated contracts' financial limit and:

- is restricted to home to school transport provision and does not address the wider needs of the Council to provide transport service to residents, e.g. adult services;
- does not support short-term contracts that often need to be stopped at short notice for Children Looked After due to the 30 days' notice period to end contractual arrangements;
- the existing terms are very inflexible;
- is limited in quality criteria and performance monitoring capability.

Alternative options considered include:

- Continue with existing DPS, however, the current system is limited to home to school transport and contractual terms would require significant review and variation to accommodate proposed changes to maximise benefit.
- Third party arrangements, however, were limited by opportunity and flexibility.

Potential negative impact of commissioning a new DPS for service users and suppliers includes:

- Enhanced terms and conditions may exclude some transport operators from joining the new DPS who cannot meet the enhanced requirements. This may impact the service delivery to service users if not enough transport operators join the DPS to deliver transport provision for children and young people.
 - A robust supplier market engagement plan will be produced that includes system advertisement, market engagement events and follow-up telephone calls / emails about the new DPS, and will set out the support provision to transport operators (existing and new) to help them to join.
 - A database of over 250 potential suppliers has been created (~150 more suppliers than the number on the existing DPS).

Potential Positive Impacts	
<p>A new DPS could impact service users and suppliers positively in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers the opportunity to extend use to other Council service areas that may provide a new or improved travel arrangements offering to children, young people and adults. • Enables the ability to incorporate quality criteria and enhanced performance monitoring through a more robust contract management framework that will support better service provision, thus potentially reducing the number of service complaints. • Enables the addition of 'Lots' tailored to service requirements which better supports travel arrangements for children and young people, e.g. Children Looked After routes that often need to be cancelled at short notice could be set up under a 7-day notice period enabling their travel arrangements to be protected by the enhanced terms and conditions of the new DPS. • A new ten-year DPS can enable the School Travel Service to maximise the benefits of the new contracting arrangements through longer supplier contracts providing stability to users and the transport operators. This may also provide transport operators with opportunities to invest in new vehicles if they know their routes may be in place for the duration of any financing arrangements. • Allows a more competitive tendering, reducing service costs to support a more sustainable service for the future of the service to its service users. 	
Responsible Service Manager	Annamarie Hooper, Service Manager – Service Delivery and Compliance
Date	20/03/2024
Approved by Senior Manager	Pete Boustred, Head of Transport & Planning
Date	21/03/24

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	The School Travel Service transport provision impacts eligible children of compulsory school age, post-16 students and adult learners (up to age 25 where they are continuing on a	N/A – no change to provision.

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	course started before their 19th birthday).	
Disability	There are approximately 1,100 children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) for whom the School Travel Service provides travel support and of those, approximately 1,080 who are transported with taxis or minibus by transport operators contracted via a Dynamic Purchasing System.	N/A – no change to provision.
Gender Reassignment	No identified impact.	N/A
Care experienced	No identified impact.	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No identified impact.	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	Where pregnancy or maternity impacts a parent/carer's ability to support their child's travel to and from school, they may be eligible for travel support under the Exceptional Circumstances criteria which may include taxi or minibus as their travel support.	N/A – no change to policy or provision.
Race	No identified impact.	N/A
Religion or Belief	Children will be eligible for free school travel under 'extended rights' where the pupil is entitled to free school meals, the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16).	N/A – no change to provision.
Sex	No identified impact.	N/A
Sexual Orientation	No identified impact.	N/A
Community Safety	No identified impact.	N/A
Poverty	According to the Department for Work and Pensions, in 2021/22,	N/A – no change to policy provision.

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	<p>25% of children aged under 16 were living in relative low-income families in Southampton. This is significantly higher than the national average.</p> <p>In the UK, children from lower income families are 50% less likely to do as well at school as their classmates.</p> <p>Children may be entitled to free travel support if they have a low family income, and they are entitled to free school meals or get the maximum Working Tax Credit and one of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are aged 8 to 11, go to their nearest suitable school and it is at least 2 miles away from their home address. • they are aged 11 to 16 and go to a school 2 to 6 miles away - if it is one of their 3 nearest suitable schools from their home address. • they are aged 11 to 16 and go to a school between 2 to 15 miles from their home address and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief. 	
Health & Wellbeing	No identified impact.	N/A
Other Significant Impacts	No identified impacts.	N/A