

Consultation on Surrey’s home to school transport policy 2015

Outcome of consultation

Response to consultation

1. By the closing date, 170 responses had been submitted online and 7 responses had been received by email/letter.

2. These 177 responses were from:

Borough/District Councillor	1
Chair of Governors	1
Family member (other than parent)	1
Headteacher	1
Member of public	1
Parent	162
Parish/Town Council	7
School Governor	2
School senior leadership team	1

3. A summary of the 170 online responses is set out below in Table A. A further breakdown of these responses according to the category of respondent is included in paragraph 5.

Table A - Summary of responses to transport consultation for September 2015

Number	Question	Yes	No
1	Have you read the consultation document on Surrey’s Home to School Transport policy?	164 (96%)	6 (4%)
2	Are you familiar with Surrey’s current policy on home to school transport?	165 (97%)	5 (3%)
3	Do you think that Surrey’s current home to school transport policy delivers an equitable policy that can be applied County wide?	107 (63%)	63 (37%)
4	Do you think that Surrey’s current home to school transport policy enables parents to clearly understand how decisions are made in individual cases?	125 (73.5%)	45 (26.5%)
5	Have you ever faced any difficulties as a result of Surrey’s current home to school transport policy?	68 (40%)	102 (60%)
6	Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a Surrey school, even if there is a school outside Surrey which is nearer to the child’s home address which the child could be offered?	97 (57%)	73 (43%)
7	Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a feeder school, even if there is another school which is nearer to the child’s home address which the child could be offered?	88 (52%)	82 (48%)
8	Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend the same school as a sibling if the sibling has already qualified for free home to school transport to that school?	148 (87%)	22 (13%)
9	Do you wish to make any suggestions for change to Surrey’s current home to school transport policy? (Any suggestions should relate to a policy change and not one that would apply to just one school or in one area.)	94 (55%)	76 (45%)

4. The seven respondents who submitted emails/letters wrote about very specific issues which will be covered below in the analysis of the any other comments section from paragraph 36.

5. A breakdown of online responses according to the category of respondent is as follows:

Question 1:		Yes	No
Have you read the consultation document on Surrey's Home to School Transport policy?	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher	1	
	Member of public	1	
	Parent	154	6
	Parish Council member	3	
	School governor	2	
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	164 (96%)	6 (4%)

Question 2:		Yes	No
Are you familiar with Surrey's current policy on home to school transport?	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher	1	
	Member of public	1	
	Parent	155	5
	Parish Council member	3	
	School governor	2	
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	165 (97%)	5 (3%)

Question 3:		Yes	No
Do you think that Surrey's current home to school transport policy delivers an equitable policy that can be applied County wide?	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)		1
	Headteacher		1
	Member of public		1
	Parent	102	58
	Parish Council member	3	
	School governor	1	1
	School senior leadership team		1
	Total	107 (63%)	63 (37%)

Question 4:		Yes	No
Do you think that Surrey's current home to school transport policy enables parents to clearly understand how decisions are made in individual cases?	Borough / district councillor		1
	Family member (other than parent)		1
	Headteacher		1
	Member of public	1	
	Parent	120	40
	Parish Council member	3	
	School governor	1	1
	School senior leadership team		1
	Total	125 (73.5%)	45 (26.5%)

Question 5:		Yes	No
Have you ever faced any difficulties as a result of Surrey's current home to school transport policy?	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)		1
	Headteacher	1	
	Member of public	1	
	Parent	64	96
	Parish Council member		3
	School governor		2
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	68 (40%)	102 (60%)

Question 6:		Yes	No
Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a Surrey school, even if there is a school outside Surrey which is nearer to the child's home address which the child could be offered?	Borough / district councillor		1
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher	1	
	Member of public		1
	Parent	90	70
	Parish Council member	2	1
	School governor	2	
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	97 (57%)	73 (43%)

Question 7:		Yes	No
Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a feeder school, even if there is another school which is nearer to the child's home address which the child could be offered?	Borough / district councillor		1
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher		1
	Member of public		1
	Parent	85	75
	Parish Council member		3
	School governor	1	1
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	88 (52%)	82 (48%)

Question 8:		Yes	No
Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend the same school as a sibling if the sibling has already qualified for free home to school transport to that school?	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher	1	
	Member of public		1
	Parent	140	20
	Parish Council member	2	1
	School governor	2	
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	148 (87%)	22 (13%)

Question 9:		Yes	No
Do you wish to make any suggestions for change to Surrey's current home to school transport policy? (Any suggestions should relate to a policy change and not one that would apply to just one school or in one area.)	Borough / district councillor	1	
	Family member (other than parent)	1	
	Headteacher		1
	Member of public	1	
	Parent	88	72
	Parish Council member	1	2
	School governor	1	1
	School senior leadership team	1	
	Total	94 (55%)	76 (45%)

6. A breakdown of the online responses by post code is as follows:

Postcode	Number of respondents	Postcode	Number of respondents
CR3	1	KT10	2
CR TOTAL	1	KT11	5
GU10	5	KT12	3
GU12	1	KT13	4
GU15	3	KT17	4
GU16	4	KT18	1
GU18	2	KT19	2
GU2	2	KT20	3
GU21	2	KT21	1
GU22	4	KT22	3
GU24	2	KT23	2
GU25	1	KT8	5
GU26	2	KT TOTAL	35
GU27	1	SM5	1
GU4	2	SM7	1
GU5	3	SM TOTAL	2
GU7	3	TW16	3
GU8	1	TW20	1
GU9	2	TW TOTAL	4
GU TOTAL	40		
RH1	5		
RH19	1		
RH2	2		
RH4	1		
RH5	16		
RH6	3		
RH7	55		
RH8	3		
RH9	2		
RH TOTAL	88		

Analysis of online responses to questions within the home to school transport consultation

7. **Question 1 - Have you read the consultation document on Surrey's Home to School Transport policy?** Overall, all but six of the 170 online respondents indicated that they had read the consultation document on Surrey's Home to School Transport policy.
8. All six of the respondents who indicated that they had not read the consultation document were parents.
9. **Question 2 - Are you familiar with Surrey's current policy on home to school transport?** Overall, all but five of the 170 online respondents indicated that they were familiar with Surrey's current policy on home to school transport.
10. All five of the respondents who indicated that they were not familiar with Surrey's policy on home to school transport were parents.
11. **Question 3 - Do you think that Surrey's current home to school transport policy delivers an equitable policy that can be applied County wide?** Overall, 107 respondents (63%) felt that Surrey's current home to school transport policy delivers an equitable policy that can be applied County wide. Only 63 respondents (37%) felt that the policy was not equitable.
12. Of the 107 respondents who felt that Surrey's current policy was equitable, 102 were parents, three were Parish Council members, one was a borough/district councillor and one was a school governor.
13. Of the 63 respondents who felt that Surrey's policy was not equitable, 58 were parents, one was a school governor, one was a member of public, one was a school senior leadership team, one was a headteacher and one was a family member (other than a parent).
14. Reasons given for believing that the policy was not equitable were as follows:
 - Providing minimum required under legislation is unfair in many cases and increases traffic congestion and pollution as parents use their cars
 - Too generic and does not allow for specific needs
 - It penalises families living close to County boundaries and inequitable to only fund transport to nearest school rather than nearest Surrey school
 - There is a disjointed approach to the way admissions and transport is assessed and transport entitlement does not take into account feeder links
 - Children living in Lingfield and Dormansland are disadvantaged because of their location
 - Transport commitment was made to Lingfield and Dormansland when the secondary school in Lingfield closed
 - There is more transport given to affluent areas of the County than less affluent
 - It limits a parent's choice of school, especially those on low income
 - Distance is measured as the crow flies but should be according to road route
 - Catholic schools should not be counted as local schools as they do not admit non-Catholic children
 - Transport policy shouldn't take account of schools outside of Surrey
 - Children with a disability receive transport whilst more able children have to travel up to an hour from the same road to the same school
 - Transport decisions do not take account of the cost of transport
 - Policy does not allow for schools that feed from a church infant school to a church junior school such as Puttenham to Waverley Abbey
 - Difference between distance to nearest and next nearest school can be negligible
 - Private coach is more expensive than taking the train
 - Transport policy forces parents to choose a school based on which is nearest

- Policy needs to take in to account geographical obstacles, existing transport links and community cohesion
- People want their children to go to the best school
- If a decision is made to go to a school that is further away and they have to pay this is unfair and will mean that only people who can afford to pay for travel will attend that school
- No provision for families where both parents are working
- Doesn't enable siblings to travel safely together
- A sliding scale of fees would be fairer
- The policy is just followed as written with no opportunity to improve or review on case by case basis
- Disproportionate number of taxis to Surrey Hills but poor parking in village should not be a reason for excessive transport at the cost of the taxpayer
- A school place should automatically come with transport if the child requires it, above a certain distance
- Unfair that children entitled to free school meals have free transport to their nearest three schools between 2 and six miles whilst others do not

15. **Question 4 - Do you think that Surrey's current home to school transport policy enables parents to clearly understand how decisions are made in individual cases?** Overall, 125 respondents (73.5%) felt that Surrey's current home to school transport policy enabled parents to clearly understand how decisions are made in individual cases. Only 45 respondents (26.5%) felt that the policy did not enable parents to clearly understand how decisions are made.

16. Of the 125 respondents who felt that Surrey's current policy enabled parents to clearly understand how decisions are made, 120 were parents, three were Parish Council members, one was a school governor and one was a member of public.

17. Of the 45 respondents who felt that Surrey's policy did not enable parents to clearly understand how decisions are made, 40 were parents, one was a borough/district councillor, one was a school governor, one was a school senior leadership team, one was a headteacher and one was a family member (other than a parent).

18. Reasons given for believing that the policy did not enable parents to clearly understand how decisions are made were as follows:

- The fact cases are dealt with on an individual basis means that the policy can't explain how individual decisions are made
- It is not transparent enough
- Ambiguity to way policy is worded – not clear if you have to apply for schools in the same order as they are distance from home address or if you just have to apply for nearest
- Policy not aligned to admissions and so difficult for parents to make informed decisions
- Too complicated and obtuse – try simple english
- One child might get transport and the next might not
- Some schools may appear closer but don't take account of rivers, traffic problems or how long a journey will take by road
- Little clarity about decisions for schools which change status
- Fails to take account of individual circumstances

19. **Question 5 - Have you ever faced any difficulties as a result of Surrey's current home to school transport policy?** Overall, 68 respondents indicated that they had faced difficulty as a result of Surrey's current home to school transport policy whilst 102 indicated that they had not.

20. Of the 68 respondents who indicated that they had faced a difficulty, 64 were parents, one was a borough/district councillor, one was a member of public, one was a school senior leadership team and one was a headteacher.

21. Examples of difficulties which had been faced as a result of the transport policy which were within the remit of this consultation were as follows:
- The Chair of Governors at Surrey Hills (and district councilor for Mole Valley) raised an issue whereby children are not eligible to receive transport to the Westcott site for the junior phase of their education because they have another nearer school, despite the Abinger Common site being their nearest school.
 - The senior leadership team of Oxted School indicated that they had seen a significant drop in numbers as a result of the policy
 - A number of parents commented on the uncertainty of receiving transport from Dormansland, Lingfield and Tatsfield to Oxted because they have an out of County school that is nearer
 - A parent who lived in Lingfield commented that they were not eligible to free transport to Oxted School because Oakwood in Horley was closer, despite there being no direct transport links to that school
 - A parent expressed concern that the bus to St Bede's in Send and the bus to George Abbot School ceased, creating difficulties and increased cost in getting to school
 - A parent indicated that they had difficulty getting a concessionary seat on the bus to Waverley Abbey, which stopped outside their house
 - A parent indicated that they were not eligible for free transport to Rydens Enterprise School because it was not the closest school but the schools that were closer were a much longer drive than when measured as the crow flies
 - A parent in Capel was advised that a busy road with no pavement or street lighting was a safe walking route
 - Several parents indicated that their eldest child receives free transport but that the younger one does not
 - A parent indicated that they were not eligible to receive free transport from Oakwood Hill to The Priory because another school was nearer, despite children from the village traditionally going to Dorking schools.
22. **Question 6 - Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a Surrey school, even if there is a school outside Surrey which is nearer to the child's home address which the child could be offered?** Overall, 97 respondents (57%) thought that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a Surrey school, even if there was a nearer school outside of Surrey which could offer a place. However, 73 respondents (43%) thought that Surrey should not offer free home to school transport in that scenario.
23. Of the 97 respondents who felt that home to school transport should be offered if there was a nearer school outside of Surrey which could offer a place, 90 were parents, two were Parish Council members, two were school governors, one was a headteacher, one was a school senior leadership team and one was a family member (other than a parent).
24. Reasons given for believing that home to school transport should be offered in such a scenario were as follows:
- The child may have better links with the Surrey school
 - Should keep Surrey pupils in Surrey schools
 - Links exist between Surrey primary and secondary schools
 - Transition will be affected to the detriment of students
 - Children in the same families may be split
 - Yes, if SCC would have to pay for them to attend their nearest school anyway
 - Surrey parents pay council tax to Surrey
 - Applying for schools across the County boundary generally means that the child will be out of catchment
 - Anyone who sends their child to a distant school does so for good reason
 - There is no safe route to other schools from a rural village
 - May be inconsistent with designating schools as feeder schools

- Free transport should be provided to the catchment school
 - Yes, if the school is more suitable on medical, educational, social or family grounds
 - Obligation to provide school places falls on Surrey
 - Important to go to school of choice
 - Ease of transport should be considered
 - Transport to all schools should be free for all children
 - Policy should take account of peer groups, social cohesion and existing transport links
25. Of the 73 respondents who felt that home to school transport should not be offered if there was a nearer school outside of Surrey which could offer a place, 70 were parents, one was a borough/district councillor, one was a parish council member and one was a member of public.
26. **Question 7 - Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a feeder school, even if there is another school which is nearer to the child's home address which the child could be offered?** Overall, 88 respondents (52%) thought that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend a feeder school, even if there was a nearer school which could offer a place. However, 82 respondents (48%) thought that Surrey should not offer free home to school transport in that scenario.
27. Of the 88 respondents who felt that home to school transport should be offered to a feeder school even if there was a nearer school which could offer a place, 85 were parents, one was a school governor, one was a school senior leadership team and one was a family member (other than a parent).
28. Reasons given for believing that home to school transport should be offered in such a scenario were as follows:
- No point in designating a school as a feeder and not paying transport
 - Transport policy should be brought in to line with admissions policy and support effective transport between schools
 - Should be considered on case by case basis
 - Feeder schools develop good working relationships with the secondary school and makes the transition less daunting as children remain with their peers
 - School choice should not come down to whether you can afford transport
 - Supports minimal disruption to the child
 - Social cohesion
 - Yes, if transport would still need to be paid to nearest school
 - It is fair and equitable
29. Of the 82 respondents who felt that home to school transport should not be offered to a feeder school if there was a nearer school which could offer a place, 75 were parents, one was a borough/district councillor, one was a headteacher, three were parish council members, one was a school governor and one was a member of public.
30. **Question 8 - Do you think that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend the same school as a sibling if the sibling has already qualified for free home to school transport to that school?** Overall, 148 respondents (87%) thought that Surrey should provide free home to school transport for a child to attend the same school as a sibling if the sibling had already qualified for home to school transport to that school. Only 22 respondents (13%) thought that Surrey should not offer free home to school transport in that scenario.
31. Of the 148 respondents who felt that home to school transport should be offered to a sibling, 140 were parents, two were parish councillors, two were school governors, one was a borough/district councillor, one was a headteacher, one was a school senior leadership team and one was a family member (other than a parent).

32. Reasons given for believing that home to school transport should be offered in such a scenario were as follows:
- Represents family equity
 - Helps keep siblings together
 - Avoids more school journeys than are necessary and keeps traffic down
 - Parents would want to keep children at the same school as this makes it easier for parent to engage with school, manage holidays and inset days, collecting them from extracurricular activities, parents evenings etc
 - Difficult for parents to understand that different decisions might be made
 - Difficult for parents if children travelling by different modes to the same school
 - Helps keep children safe if siblings travel together
 - Could charge a fee for the second child
 - If one sibling not eligible it could create difficulties between siblings
 - Prevent financial burden on families
 - Parents wouldn't have to change work arrangements to get children to school
 - Little incremental cost if transport already organised
 - More environmentally friendly
 - Forced separation of siblings due to financial costs would be unfair on the children
 - May encourage school changes
33. Of the 22 respondents who felt that home to school transport should not be offered to a sibling, 20 were parents, one was a parish council member and one was a member of public.
34. **Question 9 - Do you wish to make any suggestions for change to Surrey's current home to school transport policy? (Any suggestions should relate to a policy change and not one that would apply to just one school or in one area.)** Overall, 94 respondents indicated that they wished to make suggestions for change to Surrey's home to school transport policy.
35. A summary of the suggestions that were within the remit of this consultation are as follows:
- Allow junior pupils who attend the Westcott site of Surrey Hills to receive free transport if the Abinger site is their nearest school
 - The policy should contain flexibility and a way for dealing with schools close to the County border
 - Transport should be paid for a child who attends a feeder school, lives within catchment and has no safe walking route to any school and/or lives more than three miles from any school
 - Provide transport to pupils who attend their feeder secondary school even if there is a nearer out of county school
 - Allow children to choose whether to use buses or trains
 - Do not provide anything for secondary pupils
 - Take account of changes in circumstances of schools if parking facilities are removed and there are no suitable alternatives and no safe footpath to the school
 - There should be no exception to families on working tax credit
 - Treat all children equally and stop counting Catholic schools as nearest schools if they won't let other children in
 - Have free transport to nearest or catchment school
 - Make the policy village specific for rural areas
 - If two schools are a similar distance away allow free transport to either
 - Make sure there is suitable transport available before advising parents which school they should choose to receive free transport
 - Children should only be eligible to attend their nearest school, even if that is out of county. People choose to live where they live and should account for having to pay for transport of they live rurally
 - Make more transport available to help reduce congestion on roads
 - Discount out of county schools in the assessment of nearest school

- Align school admission and transport policies so they work together
- Provide transport to all pupils to travel to any school regardless if there is a closer school
- Policy should allow children to go to the same school as their friends
- Transport should be agreed if transport costs would be cheaper than to a nearer school
- Policy should take account of child's and family's best interests
- Consider a nominal charge for all home to school transport with some exceptions
- Siblings should be given a higher priority. Even if they pay they should travel together
- Only consider out of county schools if transport cheaper
- Take in to account transport links
- Only those with disabilities and on low income should receive free transport
- The policy needs to be extended to cover 16 to 18 year olds
- Transport should only be provided to children in significant difficulty rather than tax credits
- Transport should be funded for every pupil in the form of vouchers which parents could 'top up' if they wished to travel to a school further away

36. **Other comments** – A number of respondents chose to submit other comments to supplement their response.

37. Matters which have not already been covered elsewhere in this report are as follows:

- With busy roads buses should be encouraged
- Children should be able to attend the school that best meets their educational needs not the school that is closest
- Need support to encourage diversity in rural communities
- Imberhorne School on two separate sites and the upper building may not be the closest school
- It's the local authority's responsibility to ensure that a child can get to school and cannot discharge that responsibility on to parents because of financial constraints
- Boundaries for free transport to George Abbot should include the whole of Send not just part of the village
- Oakwood Hill, Ockley, Walliswood and Forest Green historically send children to Dorking schools but Cranleigh schools are assessed as nearest
- If a child has a school that is closer and has a place, then that child should forfeit free transport
- SCC should only provide transport to schools as a last resort for people that can't manage themselves with testing according to means, physical ability and public transport availability
- School transport arrangements for Waverley Abbey are good and high valued by many
- Whilst there may be school/area specific improvements that could be made they are outside the policy context and are for schools/parents/communities to act upon
- Replace bus passes with train passes where services allow it
- All children should be provided with a free bus to Waverley Abbey

38. The senior leadership team and Chair of Governors at Oxted school expressed specific concern at the impact that considering out of County schools in transport assessments would have on their school community and that they were committed to ensuring a seamless transition from their feeder primary schools.

39. Letters were received from Dormansland and Lingfield Parish Councils in support of families living in their parishes continuing to receive free home to school transport to attend Oxted School.

40. An email was received from Tatsfield Parish Council expressing their concern that families living in Tasfield no longer received free transport to Oxted because there was an out of County school which was nearer to most families.

41. **Comments out of scope of consultation** – during the consultation a number of comments were made which were out of scope of the consultation and will not be considered as part of the resulting report. These were as follows:

- Transport for the youngest children (4-7) needs to be much more considered
- Named drivers need to be known to the children
- Providing different modes of transport to children from the same area can isolate children
- Poor communication once transport had been approved
- Introduce a new route from Lower Kingswood to Therfield School via Headley (Therfield School)
- School transport is continually late
- No questions on safety or level of service
- If bus needs to be paid for it should be per journey and not per term
- Children should be able to pay for a termly ticket at a discounted rate
- Spaces on buses needs to be managed better to allow spaces to be filled and payments to start earlier (The Weald CofE Primary)
- Parents should contribute to long journeys
- More buses should be provided where there is no public transport close by
- Cutting school buses will force parents out on the road causing more congestion and the chance of more accidents
- Unable to find Surrey's sustainable transport policy
- Would welcome support to improve capacity and services from private operators at peak school times to accommodate children (Banstead)
- Subsidised fees and the addition of further routes/service would encourage uptake and alleviate pressure on local roads
- Improvements would be a late bus protocol to contact parents in the event of buses running late and contact numbers for the bus companies
- Please invest in road crossings, road signs and safety training to make it easier for children to walk and cycle to school
- There are some private hires that flout the law with speed and usage of handheld devices and parents should be able to choose mode of transport
- Consider modifying pavements/lighting and to make routes to school safer to allow more children to cycle/walk instead of using the bus
- Lack of communication between transport department with different answers being given by different staff
- Issues with transport providers or escorts responsible for taking children with statements of special educational needs to school
- A parent expressed concern that the bus driver was the only adult on the bus to St Paul's Catholic Primary School
- Surrey Transport did not deal with failings of a transport provider quickly enough
- Issue with safety of routes in Horley with not enough zebra crossings and cars driving too fast
- Paid for seats not notified to parents until very shortly before term starts
- School buses turning up late or failing to turn up
- The County Council should increase incentives for schools to encourage parents to use cars less
- There should be encouragement for people to group together to help each other do school runs
- Surrey should negotiate reduced/subsidised rates on the trains with local operators
- Concessionary places should be prioritised according to those who live closest not furthest away
- Transport arrangements should be finalised two weeks from the start of the new school year, no later
- Provide greater subsidy on school transport to reduce congestion
- Parents should have a say in which company wins the tender contract for their child's transport

- All schools should be of equal quality so there is no need to commute
- Provide more school buses to ensure the safety of children travelling to school
- Consider reintroducing the Pegasus bus service
- Why do all children in London get free bus travel on public transport yet in Surrey there is no subsidy for council tax payers to send children to the school of their choice
- More walking and cycling to school should be encouraged and speed restrictions should be reduced and effectively enforced