

## CABINET – 26 SEPTEMBER 2023

## PROCEDURAL MATTERS

**Public Questions:****Question (1): Louise Gannon**

Why was the temporary Summer Term offer of reimbursement for Independent Educational Psychologist fees only open to families where their child was having an initial EHCPNA? If children have not been assessed by an Educational Psychologist for 4 or 5 years, is it not reasonable to expect an up to date assessment takes place prior to key stage transfer, to ensure accurate, relevant data is used for informing school placement?

**Reply:**

The reimbursement for Independent Educational Psychologist fees was only open to families where their child was having an initial Education Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) as we are experiencing delays in this area.

The educational psychology service has retained an allocation of time to undertake assessments where this is required for children with an existing EHCP, and this is managed separately to the new EHCN assessment process.

Requests for an educational psychologist re-assessment are less frequently required and usually form part of a full reassessment which is triggered when a parent, education provider or the local authority feel that a child's needs have very significantly changed, and a multi-agency assessment is required.

There is no statutory requirement to undertake a re-assessment at key stage transfer. The local authority will carefully consider all the up-to-date information provided by professionals who directly support a child or young person and the family and child/young person's view at the annual review prior to key stage transfer and utilise this information when making a recommendation for a school placement.

If any parent or carer feels that a reassessment is required, they should raise that with their school or SEN Caseworker in order that this request can be discussed, and a way forward agreed.

**Clare Curran**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Learning**  
**26 September 2023**

**Question (2): Anna Sutherland**

Is it true that staff from Taxi companies providing home school transport for Surrey's children with special educational needs and disabilities decide which assistant (where an assistant is required) to place with which child, and that these assistants are not directly assessed for suitability by Surrey? I understand from Surrey's home-school

transport team that, 'operators will inform us if they (the transport operator, i.e., a member of taxi company staff) feel a journey is not safe'.

This is extremely concerning for parents with vulnerable children. I think most of us would assume that Surrey's SEND and Transport teams work together to ensure properly trained and experienced staff are assigned to look after our children, and that Surrey at least have face to face interviews with the assistants to ensure they can actually speak English, for example. After all, on line assessments can be completed by people other than the person who ends up working with the child.

For someone who works for a taxi company to be the one who decides on which travel assistant goes with which child, and what mix of children travel together, what type of vehicle etc. is safe, for example, is something I think most SEND parents would say is a dereliction of Surrey's duty.

### **Reply:**

All drivers and passenger assistants (PA) must be issued with an Authorised Identification Badge (AIB) in order to be contracted to work on Surrey School Travel & Assessment Team (SSTAT) routes, which once issued forms visible proof of identity and clearance to work with children and vulnerable adults on SSTAT contracts. To award an AIB the driver/PA must complete a number of assessments and checks overseen by the SSTAT.

SSTAT assumes full responsibility for ensuring that all transport contractor's staff are in possession of an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS); have passed a face-to-face English Language test with the SSTAT; appropriate Right to Remain / Work in the U.K. checks have taken place; and, where necessary, overseas criminal record checks are undertaken.

Approved transport contractors must provide written confirmation – which is checked through audit samples - that they have recruited the driver / passenger assistant in compliance with the Surrey Safeguarding Childrens Board and Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board guidelines<sup>1</sup> which includes (but may not be limited to): -

- Completion of an application form.
- Collected at least two references, ideally both employment references and one from their current or last employer.
- Have a documented face to face interview with the applicant.
- Kept on record a 5-year employment history for the applicant prior to their employment with the transport contractor

All drivers and passenger assistants will have completed the Barnardo's certificate, as proof of safeguarding training. They will then be required to complete a classroom lead Comprehensive Safeguarding training course before their first AIB renewal, which are annual.

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<sup>1</sup> [Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership \(procedures.org.uk\)](http://procedures.org.uk)  
[SSAB Policy and Procedures - Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board \(surreysab.org.uk\)](http://surreysab.org.uk)  
[Safer Recruitment and Recruitment and Selection Policies - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](http://surreycc.gov.uk)

When the SSTAT tender routes, they detail the individual needs of the children and the council officers setting up transport are responsible for assigning which children are added to a route and what type of vehicle is being requested. It is however the responsibility of the operator to assign staff (who have all been issued with an AIB) to these routes, as per the information that is provided by SSTAT at the time of tender.

The council's own enforcement officers maintain a regular audit on school (and contractors') premises of all badges and other contractual obligations and follow a contract management process to formally raise any concerns. Parents and school staff are invited to inspect the AIBs as often as they wish, through raising an enquiry using the below link:

[Home to school enquiry - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk)

In addition to the checks performed by the SSTAT all our contracted transport operators also have additional licensing or checks independent to SSTAT

- 8 Seat and under Passenger Private Hire and Hackney Carriages are Licensed by the Borough/District Council (or TFL in London)
- Over 8 Seats under an 'O' License from the Traffic Commissioner
- Community Transport under Section 19 Permits

**Clare Curran**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Learning**  
**26 September 2023**

<b>Question (3): Clare Powdrill</b>
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How many parents received reimbursement for Independent Educational Psychologist fees, following the temporary Summer Term 2023 offer? It was not at all clear on the Local Offer website how to apply for this, and repeated requests to various Surrey staff for details went unanswered.

**Reply:**

For the summer term, the council received around 60 requests for the use of independent psychologists' reports as part of the needs assessment of which 40 assessments were agreed for use and reimbursement was provided or is in process.

There is guidance available on the Local Offer website to support parents, carers and professionals to understand the conditions of the offer and the process to follow for reimbursement.

There is a section which is titled "How do I request Surrey use my private assessment report/ advice for the Education, Health and Care Needs assessment?"

The response indicates that "If you would like us to consider using your private Educational Psychologist assessment advice as part of the Education, Health and Care Needs assessment, please discuss this with your Case Officer in the first instance. You will need to share the private advice/ report with the Case Officer who will liaise with the Educational Psychology service regarding this. Once the advice has

been reviewed and a decision made on whether it is appropriate to use this, or further advice is needed your Case Officer will let you know.”

If agreed the Case Officer will advise parents on the process for reimbursement.

Information has been recirculated to all Case Officers to support their discussions with parents and carers in line with this guidance and the temporary arrangements.

The Local Offer website has been updated to state that the offer that was initially made for the Summer Term will be extended to the end of the Autumn Term 2023.

**Clare Curran**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Learning**  
**26 September 2023**

**Question (4): Paul Kennedy**

The Mole Valley Connect demand-responsive bus sharing service, operated by Mole Valley District Council on behalf of Surrey County Council, is a great example of collaborative working between councils on behalf of our residents, now covering the whole of Mole Valley and which has recently been extended to a number of other areas across Surrey. However, it can be frustrating for residents living in adjacent areas which are still not covered.

One such example is Effingham, where residents are unable to take advantage of the services enjoyed by their Bookham neighbours, including perversely the ability to travel to Effingham Junction. Is there any prospect of the service being extended in the near future to Effingham, and if so, when?

**Reply:**

I am extremely encouraged by the success of the Surreyconnect Digital Demand Responsive Transport service in Mole Valley, and I welcome your recognition of this excellent scheme. The Mole Valley service started in June 2022 initially in the north and was extended across the whole of the district during June this year. Passenger feedback has been very positive with many residents undertaking trips that were simply not possible previously.

The scheme was initially established to help improve transport options for our Mole Valley residents, and this included offering a range of out of zone travel destinations for residents living within the Mole Valley zone, including Effingham Junction Station as you note. We have received several requests from our residents asking that the zone be expanded to include them. As part of the Mole Valley DDRT performance review, we will be considering all such requests and will include those areas where we believe this will be operationally feasible. There is a service review with our booking/technology provider during November and this will assist informing the future operating areas. Any changes will be implemented during Spring/Summer 2024.

**Matt Furniss**  
**Cabinet Member for Transport, Infrastructure and Growth**  
**26 September 2023**

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