

## Herefordshire Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)

Name of proposal	Review efficiency and utilisation of transport fleet (S18)
Directorate and Service Area	Environment and Place
Saving £k	£150k
Name of Lead Officer (s)	Mairead Lane

### Step 1: What is the proposal?

Please explain your proposal in plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon.

This section should explain how the proposal will impact service users, staff and/or the wider community.

#### 1.1 What is the proposal?

Review all mainstream school and college bus transport provision utilising bespoke journey planning software (Flexiroute) to develop more efficient routes, optimise vehicle use and reduce contracting costs. The review follows on from the policy change to limit eligibility for free transport to the nearest school only and reflects how this has reduced eligible demand and the level of which are procured from the local providers.

To investigate and establish, subject to confirming a sound business case, an expanded in house bus fleet to provide not for profit Special Education Needs (SEN) and school transport to reduce contract costs.

### Step 2: What information do we have?

Decisions must be evidence-based, and involve people with protected characteristics that could be affected. Please use this section to demonstrate understanding of who could be affected by the proposal.

#### 2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

The council holds data on:

- Mainstream and SEN school transport services
- Children with statutory eligibility for free school transport and discretionary riders who pay to use vacant seats, denominational and Post 16 transport
- Children with education, health care plans with statutory eligibility for free school transport

- Children who access school transport services with the support of Extended Rights Grant which supports children from low income households

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

No

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

Consultation with schools, local members and transport operators will be undertaken as part of the scheme development process.

### **Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?**

Analysis of impacts on people with protected characteristics must be rigorous. Please demonstrate your analysis of any impacts in this section, referring to all of the equalities groups as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

No. Children with a disability which impacts their ability to attend their nearest appropriate school will continue to be provided with transport.

3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?

Not applicable.

3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?

Yes. In rendering school transport services we will be ensuring these services are operated with wheelchair accessible vehicles (in line with the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations - PSVAR). This will extend mainstream school transport access for children with physical disabilities by enabling them to travel to school or college by the same means of transport as their peers.

Expanding the council's in house fleet of accessible vehicles could enable the council to establish a vehicle brokerage scheme. This would allow community groups who support residents with protected characteristics to loan vehicles for social, educational and welfare journeys.

#### 3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?

The use of the route planning software provides a much clearer visual guide for parents who may not be aware of the school transport services available to support them, either through statutory eligibility or discretionary paid for transport. By actively publicising this information the council will be able to ensure clear information is available to a wider audience of potential users.

This same pro-active approach could be applied to promoting the availability of council operated accessible vehicles. This would increase the potential for community groups to identify opportunities to offer increased support to residents with protected characteristics.

### **Step 4: So what?**

#### 4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?

No direct impact on the proposal.

#### 4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?

Following consultation on proposed new routes and any subsequent changes to routes and specifications services will be retendered to commence in the following school term. Details of any new routes/pick times will be communicated to parents directly and shared on the council's website to ensure parents not currently using school transport will be able to see which services might be available either as a statutory eligibility or on a discretionary basis through the vacant seats scheme.

An equality impact assessment will be included with the development of the business case for proposal for expanding the in house transport service. Given it is not anticipated to directly impact service users the impact assessment is likely to focus on the impact of people currently employed in providing these services in the commercial sector and how they would be affected if the services are brought in house.

#### 4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

Capacity and usage of services will continue to be monitored to ascertain if they are meeting the council's statutory duties. We will also review routing options in order to minimise journey times where required.

Key performance indicators (KPI's) for proposal to expand the in house transport service will be developed as part of the full business case.

**Service Director sign-off:**

**Date:** 30 January 2021

Richard Ball  
Director of Economy & Place