

Equality Impact Assessment

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and why does the County Council do them?

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) is an obligation within the [Equality Act 2010](#) (“the Act”), which asks public authorities, like Hampshire County Council, to give ‘due regard’ to equality considerations, in particular to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes assessing the impact of policies and practices on individuals and communities with a protected characteristic, as defined in the Act and some other specific groups. The County Council uses EIAs to ensure it has paid ‘due regard’ to equalities considerations when there are changes to a service or policy, a new project or certain decisions.

EIA author	Position & Department	Contact
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Title:	Permission to consult on proposed changes to the School Transport Policy (Oct 2025)
Related EIAs:	None
EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	The School Transport Service
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	Hampshire County Council (the Council) has a statutory duty to provide free of charge School Transport for eligible children (eligibility as set out in the Council’s School Transport Policy). The school transport statutory guidance published by the Department for Education states that local authorities should consult on proposed changes to Policy. This EIA supports an Executive Lead Member of Children's Services decision day report to request permission to consult on changes to the School Transport Policy.
New/changed service/policy/project	Permission is being sought to undertake a full public consultation on proposed changes to the School Transport Policy. The changes are designed to provide greater clarity on the way that the service is administered whilst continuing to keep the policy in line with Department for Education statutory guidance on Travel to School for Children of Compulsory School Age. The proposals are as

follows: • Proposal One: For the County Council to cease to offer a formal Spare Capacity Seat scheme • Proposal Two: Update the School Transport Policy to provide greater clarity on the practices and processes associated with delivering the School Transport Service. The impact of the changes on young people with different protected characteristics will be captured as part of this consultation.

Engagement

This EIA accompanies an Executive Lead Member for Children's Services decision report on the 15 October 2025.

This EIA principally focusses on considering the potential impact of the proposed changes on the Public rather than Staff as there are no proposed changes to staff terms and conditions. Therefore, the impact has been assessed as neutral for Staff throughout.

A further EIA will be undertaken following the public consultation.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Consultation – It is acknowledged that older people may be less likely to have access to the internet and may not be able to respond online to a consultation. The Council would ensure that paper copies of the consultation are available by request for postal submission.</p> <p>Proposals - As the school transport service is provided for eligible children and young people of school age (eligibility as set out in the Council’s School Transport Policy), it is recognised that they and their families/carers would be disproportionality affected by the proposed change in regard to age as a protected characteristic.</p> <p>Proposal one – Negative - Low - Ceasing the formal Spare Capacity Seats scheme.</p> <p>Ceasing the Spare Capacity Seats scheme could limit additional flexibility to children (and their families) who are ineligible for School Transport who currently benefit from the use of a spare capacity seat. In 2022/23 this was 87 children, in 2023/24 61 children, and 66 in 2024/25. However, currently spare capacity seats may only be offered if there is an available seat on an existing vehicle. Seats are already withdrawn if the space is required for an eligible child, or if there are changes to the route which reduce the number of concessionary seats.</p> <p>Proposal two – Neutral – Updating the Policy to provider greater clarity on practices and processes.</p>

	The County Council proposes to update the information in the policy to provide improved clarity of how the policy is already applied and how the service is currently delivered. Whilst these specific changes would not have an impact on how the service is delivered to this group, they could help all groups to gain a better understanding of how the service is run.
Mitigation	<p>Families with a low income/in receipt of certain benefits would still be able to apply for discretionary transport in exceptional circumstances. Whilst the Spare Capacity Seat Scheme is being ceased, the County Council could still make decisions in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Children who are currently allocated Spare Capacity Seats would see these seats withdrawn in line with the timescales set out in the current Policy. These children would be encouraged to walk or cycle to school (active travel), as they are within the statutory walking distance to school according to DfE guidelines, making them ineligible for free transport assistance.</p>

Disability

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Consultation – The Council acknowledge that people with disabilities may find it harder to engage with the consultation and will put in place measures to enable those with disabilities to take part. These include the consultation response form and information pack being available in an easy read format, a copy in another language or format (such as audio, large print, or Braille), or if they have any queries about the consultation, they would be able to request this by raising an online enquiry.</p> <p>Proposal One – Neutral - Ceasing the formal Spare Capacity Seats scheme.</p> <p>There is no identified impact based on disability and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral. People with disabilities and those without would be impacted equally by this change. If someone has a disability that means they cannot walk to school, then they would already be eligible for free transport assistance, and wouldn't be using a spare capacity seat. A mix of people with disabilities and those without can currently apply for a paid spare capacity seat, and the same impact would be felt for both groups.</p> <p>Proposal Two - Neutral - Updating the Policy to provider greater clarity on practices and processes.</p> <p>There is no identified impact based on disability and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral. The policy is being updated to provide more detailed information for all users, but the service itself isn't changing, so there is no impact, regardless of disability.</p>
Mitigation	

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on gender reassignment and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on pregnancy and maternity and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on race and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on religion or belief and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on sex and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on sexual orientation and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on marriage and civil partnership and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>Proposal One – Neutral - Ceasing the formal Spare Capacity Seats scheme.</p> <p>As of June 2025, 66 spare capacity seats were in use. Of the applications received for the 2024/25 academic year, 34% were approved. The charge was waived for approximately 23% of successful applications. Whilst these spare capacity seats were not guaranteed and could be withdrawn at any time should an eligible child need them, the removal of the spare capacity seats could mean that parents would need to source alternative transport that might incur a charge. Whilst most families were already paying for these seats, those with waived fees may be disproportionately affected by these changes as a result.</p> <p>The existing extended rights would minimise the impact and are designed to support low-income families to exercise school choice and support eligibility for school transport. A child is eligible for free travel to school if they are eligible for free school meals or a parent with whom they live receives maximum Working Tax Credit and they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> aged 8 or over but under 11, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home; or aged 11 to 16 years, and attend one of their three nearest suitable schools provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or aged 11 to 16 years, attend a school that is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home that their parents have chosen on the grounds of their religion or belief if, having

	<p>regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable school nearer to their home.</p> <p>Proposal Two - Neutral - Updating the Policy to provider greater clarity on practices and processes.</p> <p>There is no identified impact based on poverty and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral.</p>
Mitigation	<p>Families with a low income/in receipt of certain benefits would still be able to apply for discretionary transport in exceptional circumstances. Whilst the Spare Capacity Seat Scheme is being ceased, the County Council could still make decisions in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>Children who are currently allocated Spare Capacity Seats would see these seats withdrawn in line with the timescales set out in the current Policy. These children would be encouraged to walk or cycle to school (active travel), as they are within the statutory walking distance to school according to DfE guidelines, making them ineligible for free transport assistance.</p>

Rurality

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	There is no identified impact based on rurality and therefore the impact has been assessed as neutral. People in rural areas may live further away from schools, so would already qualify for free transport assistance and wouldn't need to apply for a spare seat. There is no difference in impact for those who use spare capacity seats, regardless of whether they live in a town or rural location.
Mitigation	

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

This EIA accompanies an Executive Lead Member for Children's Services decision report on the 15 October 2025.

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A further EIA will be undertaken following the public consultation.

Overview Statement:

A summary assessment to show that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been paid, which is undertaken when a full EIA is not needed:

EIA reference number: 00960

Date of production of EIA for publication: 08/10/2025