

Equalities impact assessment for the road safety plan

POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PLANS

Stage one: scoping

1. What policy, strategy or plan is this assessment addressing?

The revised road safety plan

Southwark Council's road safety plan is geared towards improving road safety and personal security by reducing the incidence and severity of accidents and encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. The plan outlines the borough's approach in reducing the number of collisions involving injury and outlines an action plan to meet the overall objectives.

It is closely related to wider council priorities, including tackling poverty, making Southwark cleaner and greener and improving the health of the borough.

2. Is this a new or an existing policy/strategy?

The road safety plan was adopted in March 2005 and updated before being formally approved by the Mayor's office in June 2006, as part of the borough's adopted Local implementation plan. The revised plan is being developed to meet Southwark Council's annual obligation to update its data and consider whether existing policies are delivering a reduction in accidents. As part of this commitment, the council has decided to rewrite the policy, going beyond the requisite annual update for this year. This enables the council to take a wider view on its progress in delivering road safety initiatives, including those delivered as part of the education, training and publicity, 20mph zones and local safety scheme programmes.

3. If existing, has the policy/strategy already been reviewed under the previous EqIA programme? If so, what were the findings to come out of this and has the agreed action plan been implemented? What has changed since the last assessment was undertaken?

The current road safety plan was not subject to a separate EqIA but was considered as part of the Local implementation plan. In revising the plan, there is an opportunity to take a more focused examination of improving road safety in the borough, particularly in the context of meeting London-wide accident reduction targets.

4. What do you think are the main issues for your policy or strategy in relation to equality, diversity and social cohesion?

The revised plan intends to continue to meet the council's aims of reducing accident trends and vehicles speeds in order to meet the targets set out in the Local implementation plan. There is little evidence to suggest the existing policy is having a differential impact on certain groups, though this is something that is being considered in analysing recent accident trends and will be a core component of the policy's action plan.

In examining these trends, the council will be able to provide a break down by different equality areas, including age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity. Where any differential impact is identified, the council will attempt to procure funding to tackle the problem. This has recently been demonstrated by the road safety team securing funding from Transport for London's road safety unit to examine accidents in the borough's more deprived areas.

To address the policy in relation to equality, diversity and social cohesion, detailed consideration will be given to:

- Impacts created through the road safety plan consultation process
- Impacts created by the implementation of the policy contained in the road safety plan.

The plan will be subject to a consultation strategy, approved by the Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

The consultation process and subsequent implementation will consider the impacts on the six equality groups (age, gender, disability, faith and belief, race and ethnicity and sexual orientation) and on gypsies, travellers, refugees and asylum seekers.

Certain barriers will have to be considered, particularly at the consultation stage later this year. Consultation materials are often better targeted at some groups who tend to engage with the council on a more regular basis, which provides a challenge for the council.

A number of potential barriers that could prevent certain groups from benefiting fully from the revised road safety plan were identified which could create differential impacts on certain groups. These impacts can be split into two categories; impacts created through the production of the road safety plan in terms of public consultation, and impacts associated with the implementation of the plan and objectives it seeks to deliver.

Impacts of public consultation

The revised road safety plan will be developed in line with the council's policies on community involvement and consider its Statement of Community Involvement. However, there are a number of issues that need to be considered to ensure an effective consultation involving all members of the community:

- Certain groups may not be able to access the information and consultation documents as easily as others, for example those who do not have English as their first language, young people, people who are unable to attend consultation meetings due to caring responsibilities, older people and people with disabilities.
- Certain groups may not feel safe attending community consultation events at certain times of the day, such as women and older people.
- Certain groups such as the lesbian, gay, Trans and bisexual community, faith groups, young people, asylum seekers, gypsies and the BME community, may be afraid to express their views in public meetings for fear of discrimination.
- Certain groups may perceive that some groups have more of an influence on council policies and that the council does not take the views of all the groups into consideration. This could create tension between different groups.

Frequently it is the same groups of people involved in consultation exercises. This may discourage other groups of people from becoming involved in consultation due to lack of knowledge of how to get involved or the feeling that their views will not be taken into consideration.

Information may be delivered in a way that engages some groups more effectively than others. For example, consultation material as written documents may not meet the demands of the technological age and engage young people as effectively as older people.

Impacts of implementation and objectives

The overall aim of the revised road safety plan is to continue the council's commitment to tackling accident trends, reducing speeds, and facilitating a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. In putting these aims into action there should be a positive impact for the whole borough and an assessment will take place of equalities issues to ensure certain groups enjoy the benefits of the plan. As part of this approach, the following points have to be considered:

In implementing the physical measures from the plan, the suitability of physical traffic calming measures aimed at reducing speeds will be considered, consulted on, and safety audited. Subsequently, the engineering designs of local safety schemes and 20 mph zones may be constrained by budgetary pressures.

Evidence suggests that ethnic minorities and groups living in more deprived areas are more likely to be involved in an accident. The council will review this on an ongoing basis and feed it into the revised policies in the action plan.

Although education, training and publicity and school travel plans are universally available, certain schools that are less engaged with the council may not wish to participate in delivering the road safety plan. This provides the council with a challenge to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to engage with all schools and provide them with the benefits of promotional materials and training. To this end, the transport planning team continues working to develop its relationship with children's services.

Children schooled outside the traditional system may not receive the benefits of a growing sustainable travel budget or be made aware of the council's services to provide pedestrian training in schools and cycle training for all those who live, work or study in the borough.

It is unlikely that the revised plan will lead to any worsening of community relations between various groups. Where this might be a problem is the zonal approach taken in making the borough a 20mph zone, potentially leading to some residents believing that their streets are being used as a 'rat run' by other vehicles. Any problems with this would however be based on geographical boundaries rather than an issue of age, disability, faith & belief, gender, race & ethnicity and sexual orientation.