



SAFE ROUTES
TO SCHOOL



COMMUNICATING SRTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Stage 7 of the of the Safe Routes to School Programme (SRTS) - A consultation guide for schools to engage with their community on new SRTS infrastructural developments.

The SRTS Programme is an initiative of the Department of Transport and supported by the Department of Education. It is operated by the Green-Schools Programme in partnership with the NTA and local authorities. A dedicated SRTS Infrastructure Officer works with schools and local authorities during the process.



There are many ways in which a school can act to gain support for proposed infrastructural developments which improve safety and access to school. This step-by-step guide will help schools on the SRTS Programme as they undertake Stage 7: 'Community Support'. Guidance is given to help schools to outline their objective, identify their stakeholders, and understand the benefits for fostering acceptance for the proposed front of school developments.

STAGE 7

Community Support:

“The school involved will act as a local champion of the proposed measures to ensure community buy-in for the proposals.”



STAGE 7 Community Support

There are eight key stages of the SRTS Programme, from dissemination through to delivery. In advance of the infrastructural works, the school should act to inform and involve the school community in order to gain support for the proposed developments. SRTS have developed a suite of resources and guidance documents to assist schools to engage with local stakeholders and the wider community.

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ENGAGEMENT



HOW BEST CAN SCHOOLS ENGAGE
WITH THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

- a step by step approach to public engagement -

ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVE

1. Outline the project objective in a clear summary, explaining why the change is considered necessary.
2. Communicate the SRTS proposals to the wider community through written, spoken and visual communication.
3. Outline all elements of the proposed infrastructure and how they will support a safer school gate and active travel to school.

WHO ARE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS?

The next step in undertaking public engagement is knowing who you need to talk to regarding the proposed developments. Good communication and engagement from the onset, will help towards schemes being approved. It is crucial to include a diverse range of people. This means targeting both your supporters and the stakeholders who you feel could reject the scheme. Make a broad list of who you need to target.

Sample checklist

- Parents and guardians of school children
- Board of Management
- Parents Association
- Residents
- Community groups or clubs
- Specific access needs - places of worship, sports clubs, recreation areas or education centers
- Large and small local businesses
- Civic services - libraries, public offices, health clinics

IDENTIFY THE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN



It is important to highlight the benefits of the proposed scheme and infrastructure to the school community and local residents. These benefits can be highlighted as safer school gates, a reduction in traffic outside the school, less congestion, less noise, cleaner air and more opportunities for students to walk, cycle or scoot to school.

The benefits should not only focus on the school community but also the local community i.e. a new footpath or cyclepath will benefit everyone.

Ultimately it is necessary to communicate about why the school is taking part in the programme; to enable students to travel to school safely and actively, to improve the quality of the infrastructure outside the school and on routes to school as well as to reduce congestion at the school gates.

SRTS have many printable materials which showcase the benefits of active travel and safe access to school. Use these to engage with your school community.

MONTH-LONG ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Checklist:

- ☑ **Plan** - how to inform the school community of the proposals
- ☑ **Involving** - engage at the initial stage of the project
- ☑ **Time-frame** - set a suitable time-frame for communicating
- ☑ **Communicate** - a variety of mediums can be used to help your message reach the entire community. Choose a core communication medium where all current information is accessible for all, e.g. website
- ☑ **Updates** - Information should be aligned/updated across all mediums
- ☑ **Promotion** - encourage your network to share your updates
- ☑ **Resources** - Our SRTS Communications Toolkit provides a useful suite of communication materials
- ☑ **Submissions** - If the proposals involve the 'Part 8' process encourage the school community to make a submission of support during the public consultation procedure. Please check out the SRTS resource entitled 'Part 8 Process' for more information.

Remember that 'Part 8' of the planning application requires a consultation period of at least two weeks in order for the public to make observations and objections to the plan.

Example:



Select a date for a public meeting/workshop, either at the school or virtually - invite community members to register their interest to participate.

Gather the SRTS survey data which was collected from the parents of students.



Publish information about the SRTS proposals and the parents survey on the school website. Share this landing page on various mediums such as social media, signage, newsletters and community noticeboards.



Host an internal student assembly and a separate public meeting to inform the community and to gain support for the project.



Analyse the support for/concerns surrounding the proposals. Acknowledge concerns raised & align those fears to the potential benefits. Publish the final phase of communications e.g. social media, radio interview, local newspaper and school newsletter.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

- If you choose to host a public engagement meeting, nominate a school staff member, or a committee, who will act as a meeting facilitator or spokesperson(s) for the SRTS Programme communications.
- This person needs to be fully briefed on all elements of the programme and be kept up-to-date with all developments.
- When electing a representative(s) to communicate with the wider public, ensure the person(s) is unbiased, engaging, calm, constructive and diplomatic.



It would be advantageous to have a facilitator present who can act as an impartial mediator for the smooth running of any public meetings.

The facilitator can challenge any assumptions, ensure all voices are heard and note the opinions of each stakeholder during meetings.



SRTS has gathered valuable data from the parents of students attending the school through surveys. The data should be fed back to the school community and local residents to show the issues facing the school and the possible solutions. This data is valuable and can be shared widely to garner support for the new infrastructure. SRTS have developed editable materials that each school can use to promote their Parent Survey Results. Use these to engage with your school community and promote your data.

DATA - WHAT HAVE WE FOUND OUT?

PROMOTING YOUR DATA

Promotional templates are available as part of the SRTS Communications Toolkit. These can be developed to showcase the data results and aid towards fostering a sense of ownership for the proposals. E.g. You could promote, "98% of parents support works at the front of school that improve student safety, putting pedestrians and cyclists first".

LOCAL DEMOGRAPHICS

are useful to research If you need to understand more about your area. The CSO has several themes as part of their Small Area Population Statistics data. This objective data can inform about local commuting behaviours, car ownership, general health and families. This information can help in identifying groups who may be under-represented and need consideration.

EVIDENCE-BASED

You can bolster your campaign with evidence-based facts from available data in relation to local attitudes and behaviours around travel and mobility. Such evidence can also prove useful if your school were to face objection from groups who could, without evidence, make statements such as "no one wants these changes in our village".

CSO FINDINGS

could help bolster your campaign with real data, for example, 'The journey time to work, school or college In 2016 for people in Louth was under 15 minutes. Based on these figures, we believe that if more supports are given to facilitate active travel, more families can make fewer trips by car and travel shorter journeys to school by walking or cycling.'

IDEAS

If you need more support to better engage with your local community or school stakeholders, let us know, we are happy to hear your ideas and support your needs



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Communication resources

There are multiple communication and engagement resources available as part of our SRTS Communication Toolkit. Together the SRTS Communication Officer and your dedicated Infrastructure Officer can prepare a media pack for you with printable materials and editable templates.