

Family Voice, Family Chat Sessions, November 2018

Subject: SEND Travel and Transport

Family Voice Norfolk works in co-production with Norfolk County Council (NCC), Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Commissioning Support Units, education providers, Voluntary Community Services, and other partners to influence the planning, design and commissioning of local services so that they better meet the needs of families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Part of Family Voice's contribution to this comes from its team of parent carer representatives, who represent the views of families. In order that the experiences of as wide a group of parent carers as possible can be shared and acted upon, annual participation events are one of several ways that their views are sought and captured. The aims of such events are:

- To explore and evidence the experiences of families of children with SEND in Norfolk across the full breadth of services provided or commissioned by the local authority, commissioned health services, early years, schools and further education providers;
- To give the steering group of Family Voice some clear priorities to inform its work plan;
- To use this evidence to continue representational work with local partners to improve services for children and young people with SEND in Norfolk;
- To increase the membership of Family Voice and encourage more parent carers to participate.

This is the third series of Family Voice, Family Chat sessions and aims to give information and knowledge to parent carers while allowing them to share their family experiences with us. These involve Family Voice working in partnership with other services and organisations to inform and support parent carers within the sessions and to gather and report on the views and experiences of these same families.

Family Voice invited Niki Park, NCC's Head of Passenger Transport; Wayne Doman, NCC's Local Offer Officer; Will Tait, NCC's Transport Officer; Karl Chapman, HCT's Independent Travel Manager; and Adam Curtis, NCC's TITAN Manager to work with Family Voice. Niamh Keane from SENDIASS was also invited to offer personal advice to parent carers. We are grateful to them for their enthusiasm and willingness to co-produce the sessions.

The following events were organised:

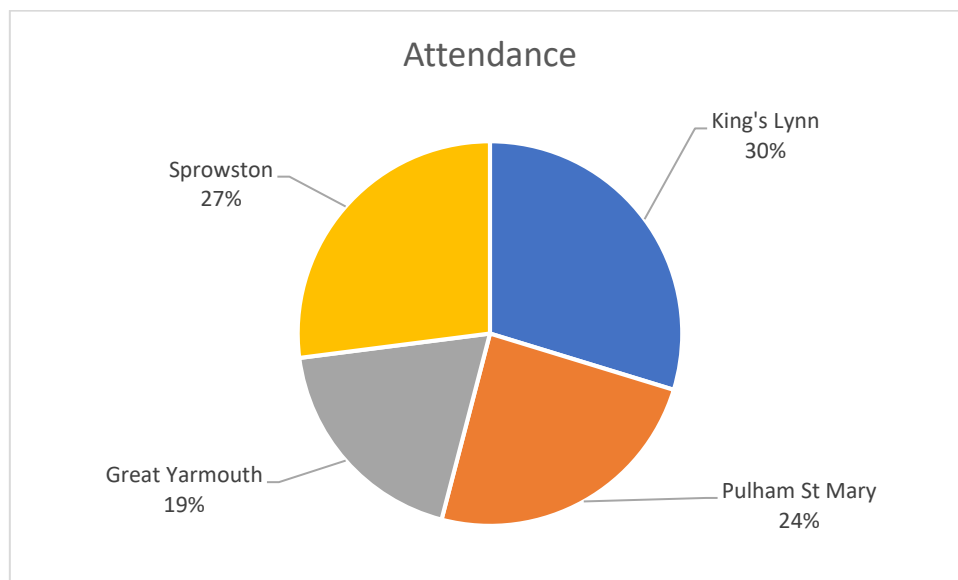
- 5 November 2018 – King's Lynn
- 12 November 2018 – Pulham St Mary
- 15 November 2018 – Great Yarmouth
- 20 November 2018 – Sprowston, Norwich

37 parent carers attended these events and they represented 43 children and young people with SEND, ranging from 4 to 23 years old. 44% of these parent carers have children in mainstream settings and 53% have children at special schools/complex needs schools.

This report also embraces two additional sources of information from parent carers: our red and green cards, and the Family Voice Membership Report.

At events where parent carers are present, such as exhibitions, meetings with our ambassadors, our Conference etc., Family Voice collects a snap-shot of parent carers' thoughts through red and green cards. Green cards can be used to indicate what is currently working well for families and red cards indicate what is not working so well. Parents can write about any experiences that they are currently having, not specifically about transport.

Our membership secretary also collects what is topical with parent carers while updating their data and signing up new members. Ten parent carers have highlighted issues relating to transport to Family Voice in the period from June to December 2018. These views have been incorporated into this report.



Based around the information-giving presentations from NCC and HCT Group, and discussion with the parent carer participants, Family Voice compiled a number of questions to better understand the issues faced by families on the subjects of SEND Travel and Transport. These questions were:

- **What works well with travel and transport for your child/young person?**
- **What has not worked well with travel and transport?**
- **What concerns do you have with regard to transport?**
- **Do you feel that the transport provider knows and understands your child/young person?**
- **Have you had Meet and Greet meetings with transport providers?**

- **Do you know who to contact if you have difficulties with transport?**
- **Have you started to look at independent travel for your child/young person?**
- **Have you heard of the Personalised Travel Scheme?**
- **Have you heard of Independent Travel Training?**
- **Have you heard of TITAN?**

Summary and key points

The information in this report has been presented as it was given, without interpretation. However, some themes were clear over the four sessions and can be summarised as follows:

- The Family Voice, Family Chat format enabled parent carers to gain knowledge and understanding of the SEND Travel and Transport policies and options, giving them a clear basis from which to articulate what was working or not working for their child or young person;
- By becoming better informed, parent carers are not only empowered to see how things can be improved, but are also able to appreciate good practice and service when they find it;
- Where Travel and Transport was working well, parent carers felt much more confident and less anxious about the subject;
- Transport arrangements are fragile and taxi drivers can leave without much notice. This can cause considerable stress and anxiety to parent carers and their children;
- Family Voice will include information for parent carers about how to report good and bad performance by transport providers to NCC both on their website and in regular newsletter updates;
- Many parents are not aware of Meet and Greet sessions that are available prior to transport arrangements starting;
- 72% of parents were aware of Norfolk's Local Offer; 53% were aware of the Personalised Travel Scheme, 22% were aware of Independent Travel Training and 67% were aware of TITAN.

The findings

SEND Travel and Transport

Over half of all the parent carers already have SEND transport for their children and young people, while a further 40% were attending the sessions to find out more about applying for transport.

When travel and transport works well both parent carers and their children report that there is good communication between them and the transport provider. Parents appreciate that drivers and

Personal Assistants (PAs) take time to meet, get to know and understand their children's needs and have good relationships with them. Some providers go the extra mile and provide individualised travel plans for children.

There were a couple of instances where parent carers had specifically mentioned that transport was going well in the FV Memberships reports. One parent remarked on the success of the taxi service received.

Four families had shared via our card system that transport was working well at the moment and there were no red cards.

My child was refusing to go to school. They are in a taxi on their own now and this works really well. I am worried that this may change when they start college.

Tiger was really good. There was no rushing. Good communication.

Bespoke planning and discussions with providers

I like that staff have made the effort to get to know my child's individual needs and give them as much time as they need rather than making them feel rushed.

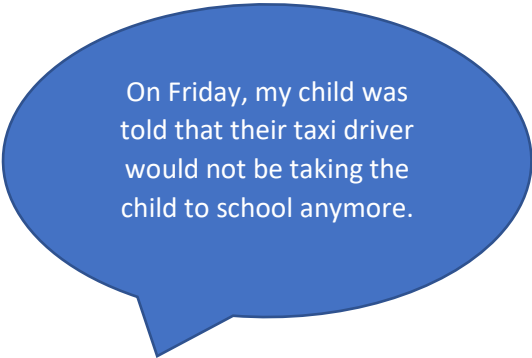
Driver / PA came up with a Wishes and Feelings page for my child

Some taxi companies are really good

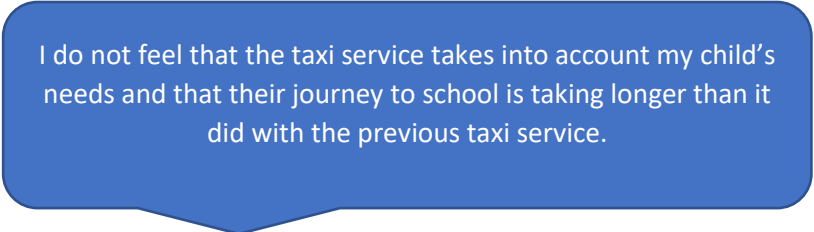
However, there were many instances when transport was unreliable and taxi drivers and/or PAs were changed frequently and without notice to families, causing stress and anxiety to both the parent carers and their children. One parent carer said that their child had had three different PAs in the past three months and four different taxi drivers. Another parent had a really good taxi driver that had been pulled off their run, even though the driver had wanted to stay and provide continuity for the child.

Unplanned changes of drivers and PAs can have a knock-on effect on the child both at home and a school. There were a couple of parents saying that their children were unsettled and upset at school because of changes to their taxi drivers and/or PAs.

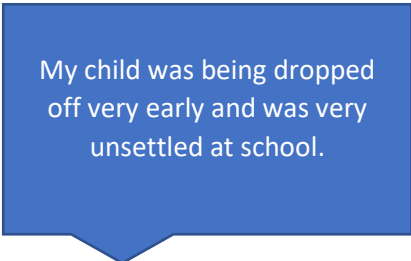
One parent from our Membership Report said that they received an email saying their child was entitled to transport the day before the transport started. There was no time for a Meet and Greet, no time for showing the driver the one-page profile and no time to prepare their child for the fact that they would be travelling with a stranger and an unknown taxi driver. Their child was stressed and anxious, with angry and upsetting outbursts due to the sudden change in routine.



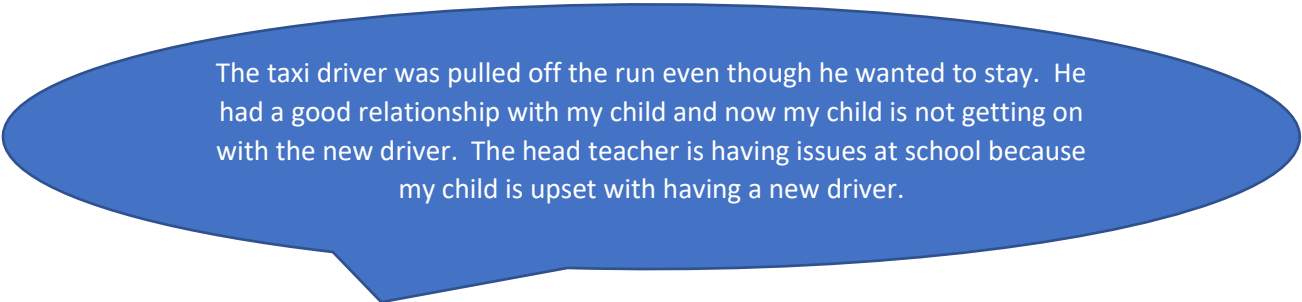
On Friday, my child was told that their taxi driver would not be taking the child to school anymore.



I do not feel that the taxi service takes into account my child's needs and that their journey to school is taking longer than it did with the previous taxi service.



My child was being dropped off very early and was very unsettled at school.



The taxi driver was pulled off the run even though he wanted to stay. He had a good relationship with my child and now my child is not getting on with the new driver. The head teacher is having issues at school because my child is upset with having a new driver.

When I stand outside school I hear the drivers and escorts bitching and slagging off the children. I see the buses speeding- bus drivers, driving like a lunatic. They keep telling me it would be easier for me If we had transport, but I have seen all of that!

(taken from Family Voice Membership Report)

My child is on a bus for a long time each day, this is making them very tired and fed up, and they are starting to refuse to go to school.

NCC Transport is monitoring the situation, and the school are logging times.

(taken from Family Voice Membership Report)

Taxi providers have been required to Meet and Greet parent carers and their children prior to starting a new transport provision for the past couple of years. Less than 15% of parents had received a Meet and Greet session with providers and, when questioned, the majority of parent carers were unaware of this service. One parent said that their Meet and Greet with Norse did not turn up and another parent had to complain because the Meet and Greet representative had said that other children were more disabled and therefore their child would have to be picked up first.

A common theme with all of the sessions was the level of training that transport providers received, especially when there was a high turnover of staff. Niki was able to reassure parents that all drivers and PAs were DBS checked and had to complete initial safeguarding training before being able to accompany children and young people. Further and advanced training was also available. Parents were also concerned that transport providers were not aware of their child's complex needs or individual behaviours.

Another common theme was funding for SEND transport. Parents were concerned funding would be reduced and options for reducing funding including pick-up points, which had been mentioned in a recent council paper. Niki confirmed that the budget was based on need and contracts were re-tendered approximately every five years to ensure that they were competitive. Niki needs to know when taxi providers are providing good practice as well as bad practice. Taxi providers can receive penalty points for bad practice.

Niki was keen for parents to have the transport email address so that parent carers could feed back performance of transport providers.

Niki Park was interesting and strangely quite reassuring

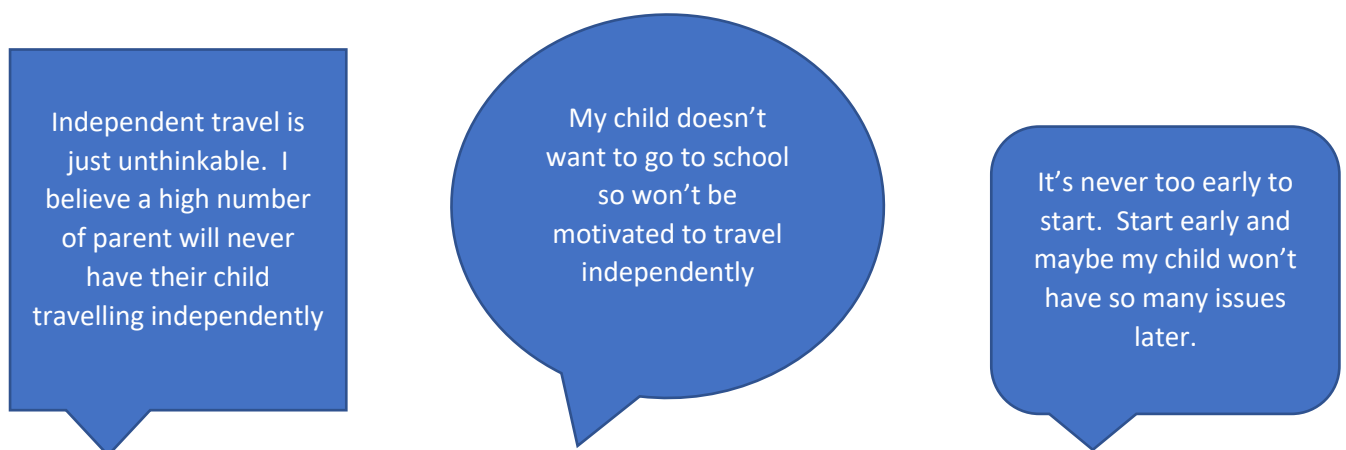
Local Offer

Nearly three-quarters of parent carers had heard of Norfolk's Local Offer.

Initially, the majority of parent carers found it difficult to imagine that their child would ever be able to travel independently. They recognised that there are many barriers to independent travel, including dangers, safety, public transport changes, stress and anxiety by both the child and the parent.

Wayne talked through his own personal journey of teaching and training to enable his young person to become competent with independent travel, and this training started when they were very young. Parent carers recognised that children and young people would require a significant amount of training even before they embarked on a scheme such as TITAN.

Parents could see the benefits of independent travelling but saw it as a very long journey and there were more immediate and pressing daily activities that needed to be done.

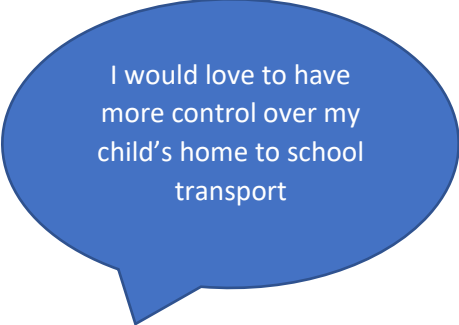


Personalised Travel Scheme


Just over half of the parent carers had heard of the Personalised Travel Scheme. Will Tait talked through the process as a creative solution for parents that would offer them great flexibility, peace of mind and improved travel experience for children and young people. It also allowed children and young people the option to stay after school for extra-curricular activities and for parent carers to be more involved in the school community.

Parents asked similar questions in all the four sessions. Questions included how these payments would affect their current benefits, how the scheme would work with car-pooling and what journeys were included.

Several parents showed an interest in the scheme with one saying that it was a very attractive option. One parent subsequently signed up for the scheme and Will was also able to attend a local support group to talk to further parents after this series of events.

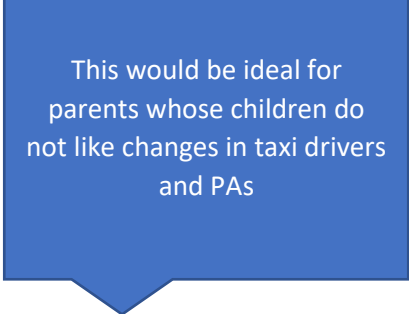


I would love to have more control over my child's home to school transport



On Pilot scheme for PTP its works well for us and our son.

(taken from Family Voice Membership Report)



This would be ideal for parents whose children do not like changes in taxi drivers and PAs

Independent Travel Training

Less than a quarter of parents had heard of independent travel training. Karl Chapman explained that only about 600 children in Norfolk would be eligible due to limited public transport available within Norfolk.

HCT group is a social enterprise group that delivers a range of services including independent travel training. Training lasts between 6 and 12 weeks, with regular reviews and reports to parents during and after the training.

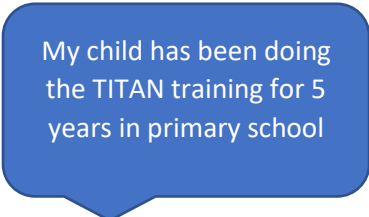
Although this was not an option for the majority of parent carers attending the sessions, parents were interested in how the scheme worked and the skills and training offered to children and young people.

TITAN


The final presentation was given by Adam Curtis. Two-thirds of all parent carers had heard about TITAN. Adam explained how TITAN worked and parent carers were given the opportunity to ask questions about the service.

One parent was concerned that their young person had forgotten all their TITAN training and Adam was able to reassure them by saying that they could do the training again.

Parents expressed some anxieties when their young people travelled independently for the first time. Colleges are able to call home to announce the safe arrival of young people if required.



My child has been doing the TITAN training for 5 years in primary school

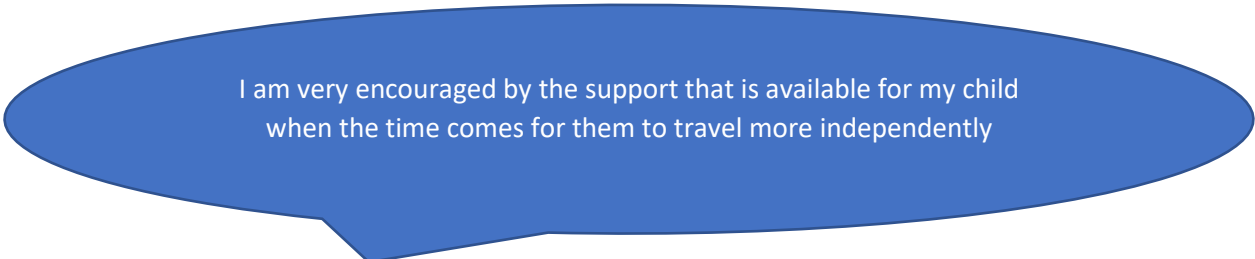


Signed up with TITAN from coming along to the FVFC Transport session

(taken from Family Voice Membership Report)

As so often, the main message that comes from parent carers on the subject of travel and transport is the importance of good communication. The ability to have direct contact with NCC's Passenger Transport department, the willingness of some transport providers to make a real effort to know and understand the children and young people, and the flexibility of training providers were all very much appreciated. Good communication means that anxiety is reduced on all sides and planning can be more effective and potentially more cost effective. Enabling parent carers' views to be heard by those making decisions and supplying services is what Family Voice is all about and we are happy to help to signpost families to services that embody these values.

Family Voice Norfolk would like to thank each and every parent who gave up their time to share their experiences and thoughts in such an open and honest manner. This document seeks only to give them a voice, for their views to be heard. We would like to thank Norfolk County Council, the HCT group and Norfolk SENDIASS for collaborating with Family Voice in the presentation of the events, for providing advice to parents and for their clarity on the subjects discussed. Family Voice welcomes the opportunity to work with services to improve outcomes for our families.



I am very encouraged by the support that is available for my child when the time comes for them to travel more independently

Bernadette Pallister
Administration Manager
Family Voice Norfolk

February 2019