

Family Voice Norfolk Consultation on SEND Transport

Consultation

Parent carers of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) were consulted via an online survey in December 2019 about SEND transport.

Background

Family Voice Norfolk (FVN) is a collective of parent carers from over 900 families across Norfolk and represents nearly 1,200 children and young people with SEND. FVN has been the strategic voice of parent carers working in partnership with Norfolk County Council (NCC) and the five clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) since 2006. It is funded through a direct DfE grant (administered through Contact), by NCC and the five CCGs.

Parent carers were invited to complete a questionnaire online and had the opportunity to include comments on their experiences of SEND Transport. The survey ran for three weeks over the Christmas period from 12th December 2019 to 3rd January 2020. FVN received 63 responses.

What did we learn?

The importance of reliable and appropriate transport for families was very clear in the responses we received. This was shown in the strength of feeling about both bad experiences and excellent ones. Their power to transform a young person's day and the result of this for the family as a whole cannot be overstated.

“The transport is such an important part of our children’s daily experience. It should not be underestimated by the LA or the companies providing it.”

Key messages

- 30% of parent carers were not offered a Meet and Greet. This service, for parent carers who had received it, reduced anxiety for children, young people and their parent carers and provided taxi drivers and PAs with valuable information about the individual needs of the child or young person;
- Nearly three-quarters of parent carers had experienced changes of drivers and/or PAs mid-way through the school year. This causes anxiety and stress, unsettling children and young people, which can have a knock-on effect on their school and home life, with some children refusing to go to school;
- 61% were given no notice about changes to taxi services, with a further 24% given less than a week’s notice;
- When it came to confidence in the adequate training of drivers and PAs, as many parent carers who responded were confident as were not confident. Parent carers were slightly less confident in the adequate training of the PAs;
- 30% of parent carers agreed that drivers had a good knowledge of their child’s disabilities and 25% strongly agreed that PAs had a good knowledge of their child’s disabilities;
- 80% of parent carers felt that autism training would be beneficial for drivers and PAs, with nearly 70% saying that training on challenging behaviour would be beneficial.

SEND transport works well when:

- There are good relationships – drivers and PAs understand the needs of individual children;
- Drivers and PAs are professional, kind, caring, friendly and engage with children and young people;

- There is good communication between parent carers and the taxi drivers, taxi companies and the local authority, where parent carers have timely information to manage their child's expectation of journeys to/from school;
- There is continuity of service:
 - where taxis are reliable and well maintained so that they do not break-down,
 - where drivers and PAs do not change at short or no notice.

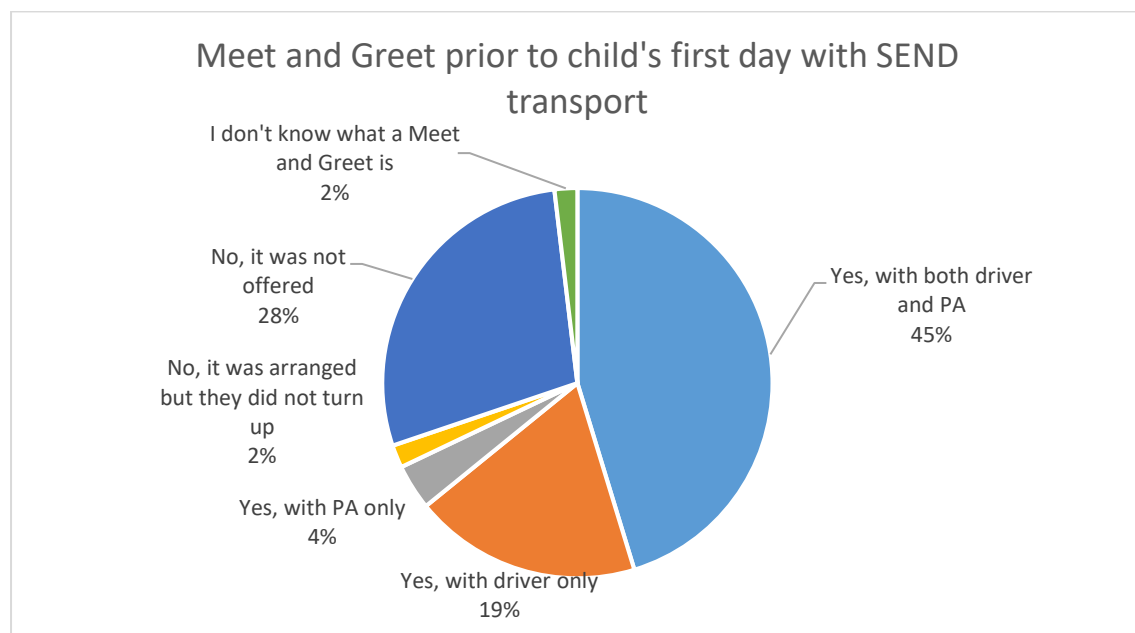
Overall, parent carers appreciate the invaluable service that SEND transport provides for them and their children.

Main findings

Parent carers were asked if they currently use SEND transport. 84% of parent carers currently use SEND transport with the remaining 16% having used it in the past.

Those parent carers that no longer use SEND transport have mostly transitioned to transporting their child or young person themselves. There were instances of parent carers reporting inappropriate behaviour and language used by taxi drivers in front of children. Please refer to Appendix A on page 9 for a full list of comments from parent carers who are now not using SEND transport.

Parent carers should be offered a Meet and Greet with the taxi driver and PA before their child or young person starts using SEND transport and in about two-thirds of cases this has happened. 45% of children and young people met with both the taxi driver and the PA, 19% with the driver only and 4% with the PA only. 30% were not offered this service.



The majority of parent carers found the Meet and Greet helped prepare and reassure their child or young person before their first day using SEND transport. It is an ideal opportunity for the taxi driver and PA to meet and understand the individual needs of each child.

There were several instances where the Meet and Greet was organised so close to the start date that parent carers were unable to make the appointment due to existing commitments and no other time slots being available. Parent carers also said that, on occasions, the SEND transport was organised so late that there was no time to organise a Meet and Greet.

Please refer to Appendix B on page 9 for comments from parent carers with regard to the Meet and Greet service.

Nearly three-quarters of parent carers had experienced changes of drivers and/or PAs mid-way through the school year. This causes anxiety and stress, unsettling children and young people, which can have a knock-on effect on their school and home life, with some children refusing to go to school.

While sickness and occasional breakdown of vehicles can be expected, 61% were given no notice at all and a further 24% were given less than a week's notice. Many parent carers gave examples of frequent changes of taxi drivers and/or PAs.

There are taxi companies that keep parent carers informed of changes. Where notice was given, it was mainly from the taxi driver or company, with only 5% of cases reporting that the LA had notified them.

While many children and young people are able to cope with sudden changes, a significant number struggle with stress and anxiety and this could be better managed if more notice was given of foreseeable changes.

Below are comments from parent carers with regard to the affects that changes have on their children and young people. Further comments can be found in Appendix C on page 10.

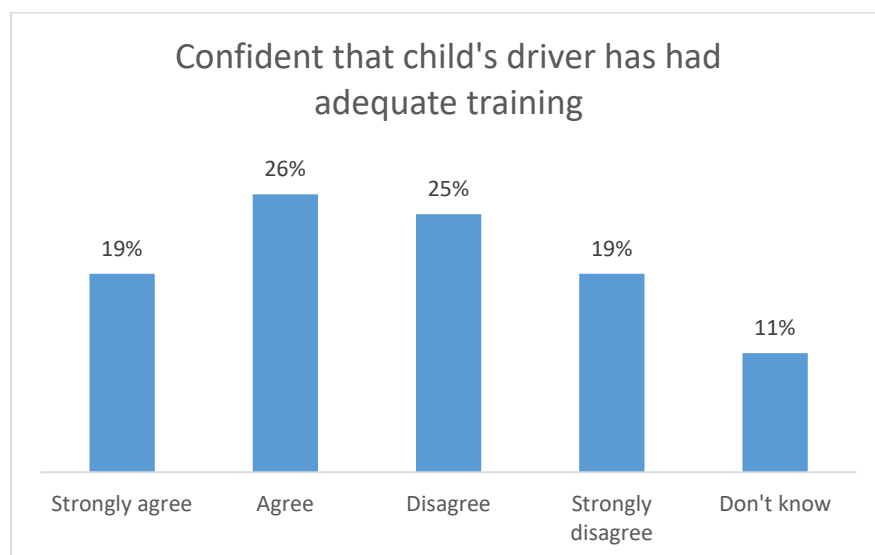
Comments from parents:

"The driver is often changed with no notice. It unsettles my child."

"We are always told of any changes to PA or driver and why the change is happening. We are very lucky at the moment with our taxi company. In the past, other companies have not been good at notifying us of changes."

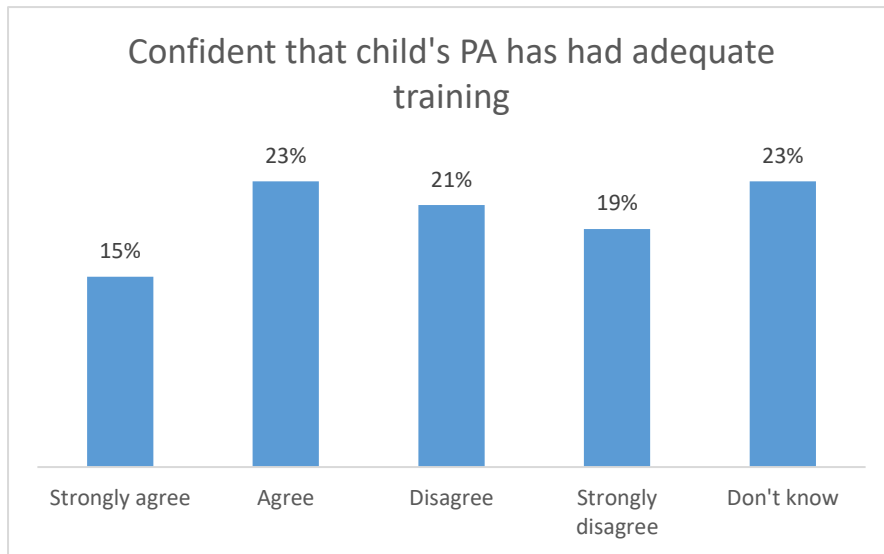
Parent carers were asked to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with four statements. Responses were graded 1 if they strongly agreed with the statement and 4 if they strongly disagreed. As each response was given a number, average scores were able to be calculated. The lower the average score, the more likely the parent carers are to agree with the statement.

Parent carers were asked if they were confident that their driver and PA had adequate training.



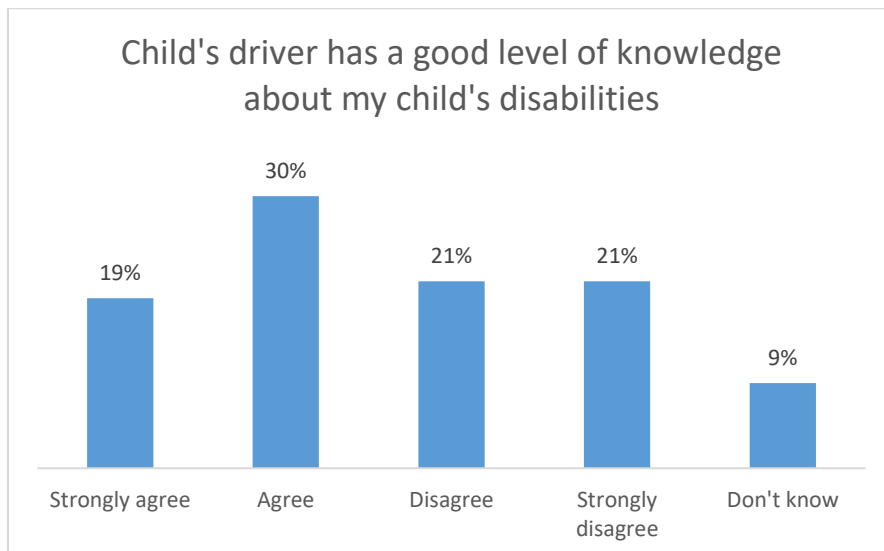
As many parent carers said that they were confident that their driver had adequate training as said that they were not confident. The average score of those that responded was 2.5.

In addition to those that responded, a further 11% of parent carers did not know or were not sure of the training that the driver or PA had received.

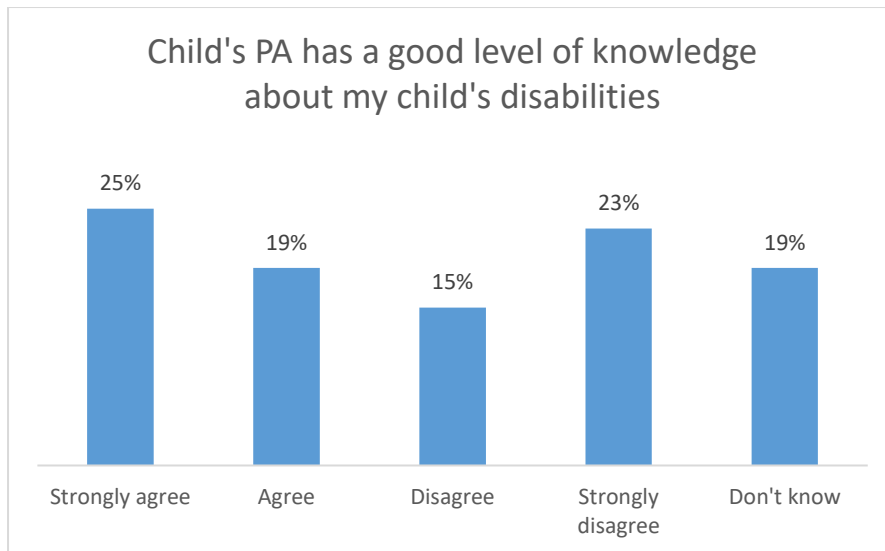


It was similar for confidence in the training for drivers, with an average score of 2.6 for PAs, although more parent carers were unsure or did not know of training that their PA had received. 23% of parent carers said that they did not know about training for the PA compared to 11% for drivers.

Parent carers were then asked if they felt that their child's driver and PA had a good level of knowledge about the child's disabilities.



30% of parent carers agreed that drivers had a good knowledge of their child's disabilities but when looking at the average it was evenly split between agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, meaning that the average score was again 2.5.



25% of parent carers strongly agreed that their PA had a good knowledge of their child and the average score was 2.4. 19% of parent carers said they did not know or were unsure of PAs' knowledge of their child's disabilities compared to 9% for drivers.

Below are a selection of comments from parent carers with regard to training and knowledge of taxi drivers and PAs. Please refer to Appendix D on page 12 for further comments.

Comments from parent carers:

"My PA and driver only know what I tell them about my children. Our PA has experience but no training. I strongly believe both driver and PA should have appropriate training."

"They are not allowed to know about medical conditions, I offered a written sheet with details and they declined."

"I am not really sure what training they have been given. I just know that they understand my child and are very good at managing behaviour or changes in day to day transport issues with all the children together."

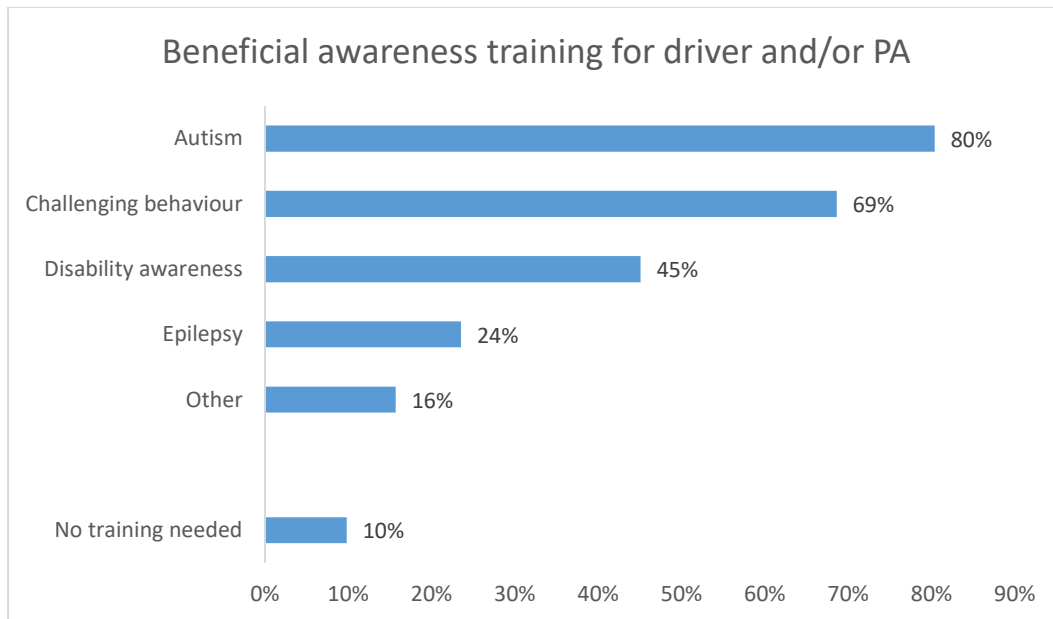
"Taxi driver has no knowledge of my child's conditions. How is that the best for the child?"

Parent carers were asked what awareness training would be beneficial for their child's taxi driver and/or PA. 80% of parent carers felt that autism training would be beneficial with nearly 70% saying that training on challenging behaviour would be beneficial. The other category included training on pathological demand avoidance (PDA), diabetes, signing and engagement.

One parent was specific about training considerations:

"But the training can't just be a bog standard first aid in the work place etc., It needs to be concerning, managing difficult behaviours in a confined space, de-escalation of behaviour techniques, and they need face to face training, not all online. The drivers and escort's both need to know about medical conditions, and perhaps details kept on the bus phone in case of emergencies. These children are extremely vulnerable and complex, and more training needs to be given, but in the right areas."

10% of parent carers were happy with the level of training that their child's taxi driver and/or PA had and said that no further training was required.



Parent carers were asked what is working well or has worked well for them and their child. The main themes from their comments were:

- Good relationships where drivers and PAs understand the needs of individual children;
- Professional drivers and PAs that are kind, caring, friendly and engage with children and young people;
- Good communication between parent carers and the taxi drivers, taxi companies and the local authority, where parent carers have timely information to manage their child's expectation of taxi journeys;
- Continuity of service where taxis are reliable, drivers and PAs do not change without reasonable notice.

Below are a selection of comments from parent carers. Please refer to Appendix E on page 13 for further comments.

Comments from parent carers:

"A calm personality, who keeps conversation simple and straight forward and keeps to the routine."

"Having the transport really helps with my child getting to and from school since it is such a long way away."

"New PA has been transformational; she is a breath of fresh air!"

"Total commitment, consistency, reliability, focus on child, excellent communication with all parties, taking the initiative in foreseeing potential problems"

Parent carers were also asked what was not working or had not worked well in the past for them and their families. The main themes being:

- The single biggest concern raised by parent carers was the number and frequency of changes with drivers and PAs. In many cases this causes considerable anxiety and stress for the child and young person;
- Changes in pick-up and drop-off times;
- Inappropriate behaviour and language of drivers and PAs with and in front of child and young people;
- Unreliable taxis that often break down;
- Lack of training for drivers and PAs on seatbelt safety;

- Long journeys for children that can then have a knock-on effect on their behaviour at home;
- Poor communication between taxi drivers/companies and parent carers with regard to changes in personnel or when taxi is late.

Below are some comments from parent carers. Please refer to Appendix F on page 14 for a full list of comments.

Comments from parent carers:

“Buses run late which has a knock on effect to the rest of the family getting to school.”

“Inadequate safe seating, PA who couldn’t operate the safety device on the seating.”

“Too many changes in provider - we about to have the fourth driver/PA this year and the third taxi company.”

“Vehicles needing work on them as failed MOT.”

“We have many school refusals due to transport. His journey now taking an hour and a half as we now have an additional child in the taxi, not good for a sensory craving child, the school and myself are left to the deal with the challenging behaviour at both ends.”

Final comments

Successful arrangements are based on excellent communication between as many as possible of the four key elements: the family, the school, the taxi service and the SEND transport service.

Overall, parent carers appreciate the invaluable service that SEND transport provides for them and their children. When the service works well, it can provide professional, caring drivers and PAs who understand the needs and abilities of individual children and young people.

In addition, parent carers appreciated any flexibility that could make the difficulty of juggling the needs of other children or working life easier to manage:

Comments from parent carers:

“Some flexibility needs to be made for parents who are late for drop off, ie to meet at another point further along route or drop with pre-arranged adult..”

“I appreciate the fact that the driver is flexible and can drop off my son at another address in the village on certain fixed days. This is helpful.”

However, transport arrangements can quickly break down with changes in taxi companies, drivers and PAs. These changes can be due to sickness, vehicle breakdown or changes in contracts with taxi companies. They can have a knock-on effect on a child’s behaviour both at school and at home, and anxiety about the instability of arrangements adds to parent carers’ stress.

Several parent carers commented about the long journeys that their child or young person endures each day and how this effects their behaviour.

In view of the substantial effect that transport arrangements can have on the child or young person and their family, both positively and negatively, we believe that it is important that parent carer satisfaction with the service is regularly reviewed, as changes can be rapid and far-reaching, involving an improved life for everyone on the one hand or something as serious as long-term school refusal on the other. One parent carer suggested:

"I would welcome a follow up call from transport department a few weeks into the first term so that I can feedback the positives and the problems."

Family Voice Norfolk would also be happy to conduct further surveys so that families' experiences can be heard and improvements measured.

Below are some of the final comments from parent carers. Please refer to Appendix G on page 17 for all final comments.

Comments from parent carers:

"I'd just like to thank the taxi staff for their dedication to their job."

"Whilst I believe the transport department are doing their absolute best, the whole system is overwhelmed and is not being 'policed' appropriately. From my experiences as a parent you have to become the 'police' to ensure your child(ren) receives good service."

"My child spends three hours a day with their driver and escort on the 40-mile journey each way. It's so important it's a successful relationship or it can have such a huge impact at school and home."

"The transport is such an important part of our children's daily experience. It should not be underestimated by the LA or the companies providing it."

63 parent carers responded to the survey and their responses represented 67 children and young people.

	Mainstream	SRB	Special School	Other	Total
5 to 11 years old	3%	1%	42%	0%	46%
12 to 16 years old	6%	4%	25%	0%	35%
17 to 21 years old	4%	1%	7%	1%	13%
22 to 25 years old	3%	0%	0%	3%	6%
TOTAL	16%	6%	74%	4%	100%

Appendix A – Comments from parent carers who have previously used SEND transport

Please share with us any comments that you have regarding past experiences of SEND transport

- We used the transport for about a month and then opted for us to transport due to son's needs and him becoming angry when coming home. This was no issue with the transport as the taxi company was excellent when we used them.
- We have three children and transport them ourselves. We have our own transport and park at school to drop them off and pick up. We would certainly never put our children on SEND transport given what we have experienced with very rude, miserable drivers. One driver even swore at me in front of my children. I have also been asked by SEND transport drivers not to park where I do despite being told where to park by the school. I have made complaints to local authority who have been very nice about it and said they were aware. I have been told by many people they have had problems with very rude people, not all, but a large number. I would not trust them with my children!!
- We were charged for his transport for sixth form. I understand this is wrong and we used savings to pay for it.
- We used SEND transport. They were great and very aware of our son's needs. Stopped as he was unable to cope with the attachment issues. Still good friends with taxi driver and escort in school so no issues at all with them. Saying this I am aware of some taxi services at the school being inappropriate in use of language with pupils which has been challenged and managed by the school.

Appendix B – Comments from parent carers about Meet and Greet

Comments from parent carers who had a Meet and Greet

- Very helpful and reassuring that you know who your child is travelling with to and from school.
- Fantastic driver, really understands my son
- Very friendly and informal
- It helped with his anxiety
- It's nice for us and our child to meet who is taking him to school
- Nice first meeting, lots of info given and not too much pressure put on my son except offered to show him taxi, which he loved (first time using school transport)
- Nice people, very polite
- Nice to meet the driver and PA and for the child to meet them too
- This was so helpful for my children
- Very good, reassuring, told all about medical needs etc.
- Was very helpful and reassuring
- We met both driver and PA, and we're happy with everything.
- Went really well
- Clear they did not like the previous firm (who were great)
- It was driver only, because I act as PA for our young person, due to extreme anxiety and historical challenging behaviour issues with PA's.
- I had to call arrange it myself. It was not offered
- It was several years ago as we have had the same taxi company for some time now.
- Not very well organised, it seems it was organised before the staff were in place!
- We did not have one with the company last year and this year the new company only offered one specific time and date which we could not do as we were only put in touch with them last minute before the start of term.

- We have had to have so many meet and greets I've lost count.
- Awkward – it would have been better to have had a couple of visits.

Comments from parent carers who DID NOT have a Meet and Greet

- I believe this should be essential and compulsory
- Just met on first day of my son attending new school. 10 minutes earlier than normal pick up time
- Meet and greet? We are given a seat on Norse mini coach
- Transport wasn't confirmed until evening before start of school and so no meet and greet possible
- Variable - meet and greet initially with first PA but then PA changed over the weekend without us being informed and obviously without a meet and greet. Another new provider now for after Christmas holidays, have met taxi owner and contracts manager so far. Waiting for meet and greet.
- We were not offered it.
- It was left far too late (two or three days before school started!) so the dates the taxi company offered we already had planned days out with the kids so we could not meet.

Appendix C – Comments from parent carers about the affects changes in drivers and PA's had on their children and young people

- It was OK as the company used the same replacement driver on both occasions and I was happy with how they dealt with it
- I am worried that new people will not be very understanding and patient. They always expect a nice, calm journey. I think maybe sometimes the PAs are not clear about what could happen.
- We have had lots of school refusals because if this, it makes him very anxious
- My child became very unsettled reluctant to travel as didn't know the new staff
- We don't have a permanent new PA in place yet but so far all of them have been nicer than the previous one.
- Our driver was due to retire. The cover driver was very good until we had our new driver.
- My son was very upset and unsettled with all the changes.
- Changes were due to sickness, vehicle breakdown or due to driver being pulled last minute for other jobs within the company. One change due to driver changing jobs but that was at the end of school year so worked out well.

My son has ASD and does not like change but he coped really well in the end. But knowing change is coming can help the transition be more smooth. On these occasions, we have a good relationship with both taxi driver and PA so it was easily resolved.

- This really upset my children as they had just got used to their driver and escort.
- My son becomes very anxious about unknown changes. Can cause tic to become worse and sometimes self-harm
- We are on third driver and 4th PA. Not ideal but the team now is a good one.

- Mostly, my son has the same driver these days, but occasionally a different driver turns up with no warning. Several of the drivers are familiar to my son and to me, but occasionally a totally unknown person turns up, usually if the driver who usually comes is unwell. These days my son can handle that and there are no issues. My son doesn't need a chaperone when he is on his own. When he shares the taxi with another child, as that child needs a chaperone, he has one by default.
- It affects the whole bus pick-up times. Staff struggles means that drivers brought in from Yarmouth have to take the run to Sheringham, then the PA has to explain the route and where to pick up.
- Has a few different drivers although PA is always the same.
- PA and driver both changed over the weekend without notice. Extremely stressful for our son and us. Made us feel as if the provider had no understanding of our son and was very unreliable/disorganised.
Also informed by the driver, not the LA, that current provider had given notice on the contract. Had to chase to get information.
Subsequently given confusing information from the LA about when new provider would start - relieved as informed it would be after the first week back but then told it would be straight away which is very tricky given school holidays - no opportunity for liaison with school team etc.
- The driver is often changed with no notice. It unsettles my child.
- A member of staff was replaced at short notice because of her unsuitability for the job. I was very pleased to see that the company had taken the action that they did and it did not distress my son in any way to have a different person on the bus.
- The driver had a stroke.
- The driver has been on long term sick, my son not affected by this as main contact is with the PA.
- Because we had same PA so the changes with driver didn't affect us so much
- I was surprised by lack of notice of driver change which has now happened twice more. My son had been fine with the change, as fortunately PA had remained the same.
- Had very good relationship with first assistant. Next one nice. But not so proactive at dealing with non-verbal child.
- For three days, a different taxi company took our son to school - finally my husband called the original taxi company only to be told NCC had changed companies on us and told the taxi company they would tell us but never did. I wrote an email complaint letter to send transport department that they have never acknowledged. Again, the new company never offered a meet and greet. The taxi does not have a PA with the driver. Taxis have broken down on us and the taxi company have never called us to let us know why our son is late.
- Have been using Transport for over 10 years now. Changes to drivers/escort not unusual and sometimes at very short/no notice. Fortunately, for us no major effects on my daughter but can see how it would have a big impact on others.
- So many changes of not just personnel, but taxi firms. I have had to stand very firm with the changes, as the impact has meant lost school days
- We are always told of any changes to PA or driver and why the change is happening. We are very lucky at the moment with our taxi company. In the past, other companies have not been good at notifying us of changes.
- Changes can happen, generally down to taxi company logistics. Usually the driver gives me the heads up that there is a change due to happen. If I am unhappy with it, I will contact Pupil Transport and express my concerns. The change usually happens at natural breaks at school holiday time.
- Emotional – anxiety overload. My child was angry and confused with the changes.

Appendix D – comments from parent carers about the level of training and disability knowledge that drivers and PAs have

- Driver and PA had no idea about my child, had not had risk assessment or one page profile, no meet and greet. I have given them lots of info on my child and how he functions so their knowledge has come from me providing it.
- Different drivers and my son doesn't get on with his PA seems to have little understanding of his needs. Have complained several times last year but still has same PA
- As taxi company has never voluntarily contacted us - never offered a meet & greet - how could they know about my son's disabilities?
- My PA and driver only know what I tell them about my children. Our PA has experience but no training. I strongly believe both driver and PA should have appropriate training.
- I'm not sure about my driver and PA's level of training as we have never discussed this and it's not an easy thing to ask as we get on well and it would feel like a challenging thing to ask at this stage having known them for many years now. I would feel more comfortable asking if it were a new company.
- Not epilepsy or complex-need trained. I have requested several times but no answers
- Drivers (there are 2 but no PA) are kind but don't seem to understand why children get anxious.
- What training? We are not told a thing. .One guy said his previous job was pizza delivery???
- Unsure, think PA was a neighbour of the driver!
- Good people at present, consistent, try hard, but lack the ability to see the nuances behind son's behaviour.
- I have little knowledge of what and how often transport staff attend training, however I always give the taxi firms my own literature and info regarding my child
- Not entirely sure, may have triggered a meltdown but I never got full story as handover tends to be quite rushed and done by driver.
- We are experiencing problems when his usual chaperone or driver isn't available we are not told in advance. I think they are aware of his disability but with more training it could be better. We need to know about any changes in advance as these have a major impact on himself, the people and children around him.
- Very keen to learn and get to know child's needs
- They are not allowed to know about medical conditions, I offered a written sheet with details and they declined.
- We don't have a PA, just a driver
- My son's current PA knows all about my son but not so sure with all the current changes that the other PA's know?
- Both are very well trained
- Our driver / PA really understands my son and cares about his wellbeing we have a fantastic relationship.
- As we have had a few different drivers now, I couldn't be sure if their training/knowledge level. I am happy with the PA as she has remained the same throughout.
- N/A for PA, as I travel in taxi with our YP. Obviously I get to know the drivers quite well. There is a wide range of knowledge amongst drivers. I have had drivers on first ever job and ex-paramedics.
- I am not really sure what training they have been given. I just know that they understand my child and are very good at managing behaviour or changes in day to day transport issues with all the children together.

- It's hard to say the levels of training and knowledge because I don't them personally
- I have no idea, actually although things are fine.
- I actually do not know whether they have had any training or what knowledge they have about disabilities and I have no way to assess this as I do not travel with them.
- Taxi driver has no knowledge of my child's conditions. How is that the best for the child?

Appendix E – comments from parent carers on what is working well for them and their families

- 1:1 transport - big fight to get it!!
- A calm personality, who keeps conversation simple and straight forward and keeps to the routine.
- An engaging talker who constantly puts child at ease. Enthusiasm and warmth.
- An ex- escort was brilliant. They really understood my son and accepted what he was like, when he got angry or violent. Unfortunately the lovely man died.
- At present, the taxi firm (owners) are causing me and my child anxiety. The PA and driver are really lovely as I've found most of the time previously. It just never lasts...
- Consistency of drivers and children in taxi
- Generally fair, but in 14 years we've had some good and some bad. Those dodgy old buses were the worst until I got an article in the EDP - new mercs arrived that week. Present driver and escort are good. Getting good staff is difficult as hours and pay is awful
- Generally, Transport has worked very well for us and our child despite changes to taxi firms, drivers, escorts, which is generally to be expected.
- Good friendly attitude to my daughters needs . Flexible as my child doesn't go everyday but good communication to confirm as & when needed
- Having the same people pick my child up and take home
- Having the transport really helps with my child getting to and from school since it is such a long way away.

Having the same driver and PA long term is also working extremely well, a good relationship has been formed. My son loves his taxi driver and PA.

Having more time to prepare for the new school year and knowing if it will be the same team driver & pa would be great. Ease my son's anxiety.

- He likes the continuity and the fact that they know him so well
- He's brilliant and very understanding of my child's needs
- If the PA listens to what we say about how to treat our children
- It is good that my son is dropped off and the PA always sees him to the door.
- It's working really well
- Keeping everything the same
- Keeping the same driver
- Keeping to the same time every day and where possible the same route
- Lovely, reliable driver, can't fault her.
- New PA has been transformational; she is a breath of fresh air!
- On time, only one other child currently.
- Only been there a few weeks so still new
- Our current taxi firm has a five-year contract to take our son; it's a small firm so he knows the driver and escort very well. My biggest worry is the current firm has the contract until April next year, mid-way through his year 11 and if the council

changed the firm at that point he could end up not sitting his exams we have all worked so hard to get him ready for.

- PA is great with my daughter
- Previous firm were more professional.
- Regular taxi driver with the same people (my child's peers) in the car. No extra stops. Taxi driver is understanding and patient.
- Same driver and same core children on the bus. They really get to know him and understand him.
- Same driver for 2 years
- Same driver/PA and access to electronics for my child
- Since attending college there has been consistency in drivers and supervisors.
- Staff are friendly and have children's best interests at heart.
- Staying with the same company which does matter to my son. There had been talk that another company might take over as they can't automatically renew indefinitely without a new tender. Luckily, the same company won and so we have kept the drivers who are now familiar. Company is flexible about the days and times my son needs transport which sometimes vary.
- Taxi firm who gives me their main text number in addition to driver is really helpful
- Taxi is hardly ever late only on rare occasions which they would contact me to let me know if they are late
- That his current PA is on the bus.
- The driver and PA are excellent , very kind and caring
- The PA is very good with my son when he is upset.
- Their willingness to be flexible where necessary, for example, they have been happy to collect from 2 different addresses as my son lives in 2 households and this has been really helpful. Also their willingness to get to know my son really well. I get the impression that they genuinely LIKE my son, and that is really important to me as he spends a lot of time with them each week.
- They never late and most important my child is happy to go in car every morning
- Total commitment, consistency, reliability, focus on child, excellent communication with all parties, taking the initiative in foreseeing potential problems
- We have contacted the taxi companies to ask if SEND transport is continuing and been told they have our son on their list and will collect him from beginning of September. We have not had the worry or trouble other families have had trying to sort this out even at the beginning of September - some families still did not know which company would be transporting their child.
- We have had some fantastic drivers who really care for my child.
- We started using SEND transport in September 19 although our driver changed due to retirement our PA has been very good. All children are so different and our PA has learnt very quickly the needs of our child and is very professional and caring.

Appendix F – comments from parent carers on what is NOT working well for them and their families

- A few occasions the minibus has been late picking up my son which is slightly stressful as I have to get my other two children to school and this makes them late!
- Ability to pinpoint reasons for distress. Overly negative. Passing on stress from their journey on to us.
- All fine.
- Buses run late which has a knock on effect to the rest of the family getting to school.

- Can't think of anything at the moment. I did have some concerns in the past that some of the other children on the bus could be violent and my son did get hit once but since then, the seating arrangement has been changed and he is very happy in the front seat!
- Changes in driver and PA, when the driver just drives and doesn't help the PA with the passengers,
- Changes in pick up times, especially very early ones before 7am. It is a very long day for my son. This seems to be affected by number of children to be picked up on his route.

Also, they changed the pick-up policy, in terms of times so my son can no longer do after school clubs.

- Continual changes of drivers, P.A's, cars. Presently, our biggest issues are changes of drivers, the needs of my child are not being supported (again by the owners).
- Doesn't get on well with PA, has in past had to wait half hour for another child to finish school before coming home
- Don't have any problems
- Drivers having term time holiday and having to have a substitute driver isn't helpful. One company was consistently late (over 20 mins) to collect my child at the end of the day and it took too long to resolve causing significant stress to my child and myself.
- First driver hard of hearing, didn't have meet and greet, next driver not aware of my child's conditions, how he should be treated etc. First PA totally clueless and always moaning. Now we have fabulous PA who has transformed the journeys for my child.
- How long is a piece of string? Just had another county hall letter saying another transport review is due. Plus you must be aware that there are two schools in North Norfolk where the taxi bill alone at each school is one million pounds a year .- that's the problem
- I moved in the summer and Norse are the transport provider, which is the first time with them after having Yarmouth-based taxi companies which generally worked fine for us.

I have discovered it is not the policy of Norse to knock on my door and escort my child to the taxi. In the past other taxi firms have always knocked on the door if my child had not already appeared.

Our drive is around 40 metres from end to door and it is not always easy to see the taxi from the front door. A couple of months ago I discovered the taxi had waited for a few minutes and then drove off without my child. Unfortunately, we had not seen the taxi and they had not come to the door. I think this policy is wrong.

Also my child is dropped at the top of the drive and walks to the front door with the taxi generally having driven off. Fortunately, my child is mostly sensible enough to walk straight into the house. I do not intend standing at the top of my drive in the morning or afternoon for however long it takes for the taxi to turn up unless I have to!

- In the past poor communication with taxi company. Not knowing who has the contract until the last minute.
- In the past when we had another firm, we would get different drivers all the time with no warning, which caused all sorts of negative behaviour at home and school.
- Inadequate safe seating, PA who couldn't operate the safety device on the seating. She was also not very friendly or approachable but has left now. Our driver is brilliant though, always cheerful and kind and seems to genuinely care about all the children and keeping them safe and happy.
- Lack of meet & greet opportunities offer by taxi companies, when taxi has broken down and a new taxi has been sent out to collect our child – The taxi company never contacts parents and lets them know their child is going to be late

- Lack of understanding around car seat safety and wearing thick coats in cars seems to be universally unknown. Applicable to all children travelling any distance especially those of 45 minutes plus.
Lack of preparation for iPad battery running out!! PA doesn't help with plugging in etc.
- Long routes and minibuses full of children (our YP has autism and LD and extreme anxiety). This provoked very challenging behaviour.
- No notice is given for time changes for collection or drop off. We have been threatened with losing transport because my son had a meltdown when stuck in a traffic jam. The feedback at the end of the day is always a negative comment.
- Nothing
- Often problems with the vehicle
- Our child is less happy this year than last but that seems to be because there is a new older child in the taxi who they don't gel well with. It has meant our child didn't want to go by taxi a few times but school have been good at speaking to the taxi PA about this. The taxi pick up time is 20 minutes earlier this year compared to last which means they sit outside school for around 20 minutes before being allowed in.
- Regular taxi breaking down
- Shouting & swearing at my child
- Sometimes the PAs are not always understanding and do not realise that it could be a challenging journey.
- Sometimes my son can become frightened by other children in the taxi who can hit out.
- Sometimes overly strict with holding toys, or that he made seat a bit messy.
- Taxi arrives late without warning making me late for work
- The child who is picked up before us is sometimes late which affects our pick up time
- The taxi company keep changing the PA's without any notice from them!
Not acceptable!!
- The language of drivers in car park pick up is appalling. I've heard them speak about autistic children as naughty. They are not good role models.
- Three children in the back of a normal car when all fidgety and anxious is too many.
- Too many changes in provider - we about to have the fourth driver/PA this year and the third taxi company
- Unknown driver changes
- Unsure how much knowledge driver has of children with disabilities as moans a lot over behaviour in the bus.
- Vehicles needing work on them as failed MOT
- We are not informed if the transport us going to be delayed/late. We have to phone to find out what is going on. Our child gets anxious and worried when they don't arrive on time.
- We have many school refusals due to transport. His journey now taking an hour and a half as we now have an additional child in the taxi, not good for a sensory craving child, the school and myself are left to the deal with the challenging behaviour at both ends.

Appendix G – Final comments from parent carers

- Apart, from the constant changes in PA's. My son does actually like going on the bus to school!
- But the training can't just be a bog standard first aid in the work place etc., It needs to be concerning, managing difficult behaviours in a confined space, de-escalation of behaviour techniques, and they need to face to face training, not all online. The drivers and escort's both need to know about medical conditions, and perhaps details kept on the bus phone in case of emergencies. These children are extremely vulnerable and complex, and more training needs to be given, but in the right areas. Also there needs to be a clear route to making a complaint or raising a concern.
- On a positive note I would say SEND transport has been an invaluable service for us and generally it has worked very well.
- Good
- Grateful to have it but can be stressful due to above plus times of arrival change which creates additional anxiety for our son and then us!
- Happy with current taxi situation
- Having to reapply each year because we live 0.1 mile under the 3 miles rule is a worry as we cannot plan ahead/make job decisions in case we lose the taxi.
- I do think that sometimes they may take on the job not realising what it can entail. It's not always an easy journey with my son and if caught in traffic or road diversions, it's not sit back and relax.
- I don't think it's fair for a child with SEN, to have a such a long journey to school every day. His health, behaviour and education is being affected as he has to get up so early to be ready in time for the taxi. He is not coping well at all.
- I have spent far too many hours transporting my child to school. At its height, 4 hours /day on a split shift. 20 hours /week, because the SEND transport system could not support our YP on their journey to school. My child now boards Monday to Friday which has helped with the endless transition process to and from school. It has been very hard work.
- I'd just like to thank the taxi staff for their dedication to their job.
- In the past NCC have not told us the name of the taxi company that will be transporting our child, and feel they do not understand the vulnerability of our children and that we should just accept that the taxi arriving for our child on the first day is the correct one. In the past we have had to make enquiries ourselves and arrange our own meet and greet. Hopefully things have now changed.
- It all seems to depend on the individual taxi providers. If there is a problem it is inevitably due to a breakdown in communication between Norfolk County Council Transport section and the actual taxi provider
- It's been great for us, although Norfolk county council have wanted to change it we're really lucky that it remains the same
- It's been the most stressful aspect of education in that the LA refused to listen to safeguarding concerns and disregarded CAMHS Clinical Psychology report without valid reason. We feel that the LA acted negligently; this decision came from the Head of Passenger transport. Eventually the appropriate decision was made which meets our child's needs after intervention from the Head of their new setting. There is now no self-harm during travel. We had applied approx. 4 times in total for 1:1 transport and had resorted to picking our child up ourselves for a whole term due to extreme safeguarding issues.
- Just with help, would difficult juggling between two school every morning and afternoon
- Meet and greets are essential. Arrangements should not be so last minute. Communication from the transport department during the summer holidays is dire. I would welcome a follow up call from transport department a few weeks into the first term so that I can feedback the positives and the problems.
- My child spends three hours a day with their driver and escort on the 40-mile journey each way. It's so important it's a successful relationship or it can have such a huge impact at school and home.

- Overall, it works for us very well and I feel confident and comfortable with my taxi driver and PA. I would hate for it to change. My child enjoys his journey with them and so is always eager to go to school.
- Overall has been much easier than anticipated.
Some flexibility needs to be made for parents who are late for drop off, ie to meet at another point further along route or drop with pre-arranged adult.
- Overall it is a good service and I appreciate the fact that the driver is flexible and can drop off my son at another address in the village on certain fixed days. This is helpful.
- PA and driver need more training awareness of disabilities and how to communicate with the children also how to spot problems e.g. unwell, pain etc
- Pleased overall with provision and people, but specialist and bespoke training is required.
- Taxi firms make a bomb. If and when the Fakenham and Great Yarmouth new schools ever open, the whole ball game changes over contracts. It's a dilemma due to Norfolk's lack of schools and a large rural mass, plus the increase in children with disabilities
- The transport is such an important part of our children's daily experience. It should not be underestimated by the LA or the companies providing it.
- The way seats are positioned so if some children hit out they are not near other children.
- We can't praise our driver and pa highly enough
- We have been happy with transport overall.
- We have been lucky to have good stability and while there might be different drivers, mostly they are familiar and even when not we trust that the head of the taxi company will send a suitable driver.
- Whilst I believe the transport department are doing their absolute best, the whole system is overwhelmed and is not being 'policed' appropriately. From my experiences as a parent you have to become the 'police' to ensure your child(ren) receives good service.