

Topic of Importance – Transport and Communication with Parents

What are parents telling us?

Communication is a key concern of parent carers across a range of services/ support and needs relating to their child/ young person with SEND. Poor or last minute communications cause extra anxiety and stress to parent carers already feeling under pressure for a range of reasons. An area that has come to the forefront of parent carers minds and concerns lately relates more specifically to communication about home to school transport. Although it should be noted this is not a new concern, rather one that arises annually as parent carers prepare their child/ young person for return to school after the summer break. Evidence as detailed in this Tol shows that communication is very late with some parents not knowing until the evening before or most worrisome the morning of the return to school who will be transporting their child/ young person to school. Some key themes are:

1. Information is seen to be very late in the day
2. Communication is viewed as poor/ patchy and confusing
3. There is high familial anxiety
4. Parents feel it is difficult to make plans/ prepare
5. Parents report issues on a yearly basis

Where we get our evidence from

Over the past few weeks FVP have detected a rise in discussions online relating to home to school transport initiated by parent carers primarily in the Facebook chatroom managed by the forum. After monitoring the chatroom discussions a brief poll was conducted relating to the topic being discussed.

1. FB Discussions (Initiated by Parent Carers) 9
2. FB Polls – 1 (6 respondents) which asked if parents felt communication was too late with regards to transport provision details. All respondents said it was.

The parents who took part in discussions are fairly representative and have children and young people in mainstream and specialist settings across primary and secondary levels. Their children and young people have a range of needs including physical, learning and neurodevelopmental.

Questions/ Discussion Point initiated by parents were:

1. Does anyone know what precautions school transport will be taking in September?
2. Anyone have an idea how long it normally takes to get school transport sorted?
3. I was wondering if anyone would be able to tell me whether their kids are taken to school without an escort?
4. Should we have heard about school transport yet?
5. She start day is tomorrow and I still have no idea what time the taxi is coming, who is coming or anything at all! They were supposed to give me a call last week with final details and still nothing....
6. Still not had a letter from transport for my daughter as she starts at college tomorrow,.....

Other parental comments:

1. I worried about this last year... It was quite late in to the summer holidays before I knew either way. They don't start till all applications are in for transport
2. For us they tended to just do it last minute
3. We have always had an escort in ours but don't know what's going to happen this time round as still waiting for the transport info to come through.
4. Even if you do have one in your taxi you will need to be having a word with them as sometimes they don't even get off the car to help the child in or guide them in and out. I have had to have a word with ours a few times.
5. The actual arrangements can be a little slow. They normally call a week or so before with all that
6. Same here I have emailed transport but haven't had an answer yet.
7. We literally got confirmation on Friday night, of him starting Monday.
8. it's so annoying that we have to keep fighting for the simple things can't understand why they can't get they sorted out in the 6-weeks holiday

How have FVP responded

To establish that the issues being mentioned by parent carers were long standing and related primarily to communication and had certain themes, a further small scale survey was developed and conducted which elicited 17 responses.

As a survey was conducted it was possible to establish some data relating to gender, ability, age and setting attended of children and young people accessing home to school transport which helps to demonstrate a good spread of views. Figures 1 to 4 demonstrate this.

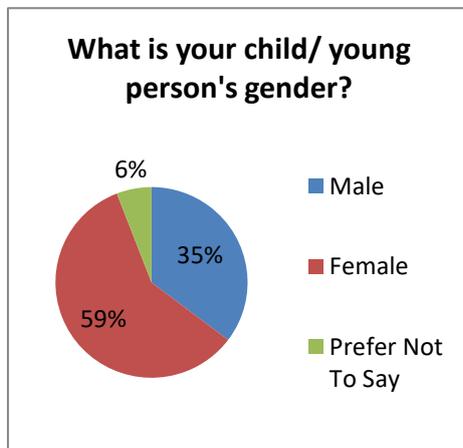


Fig.1 Gender of CYP

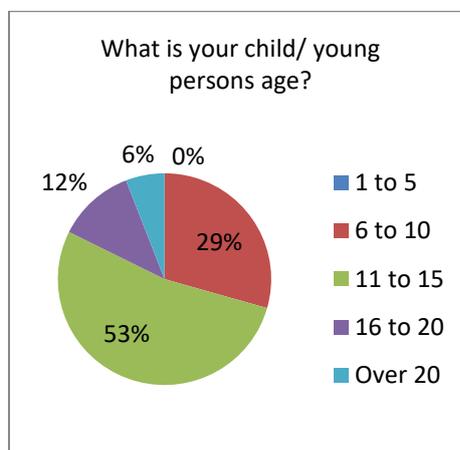


Fig.2 Age Range of CYP

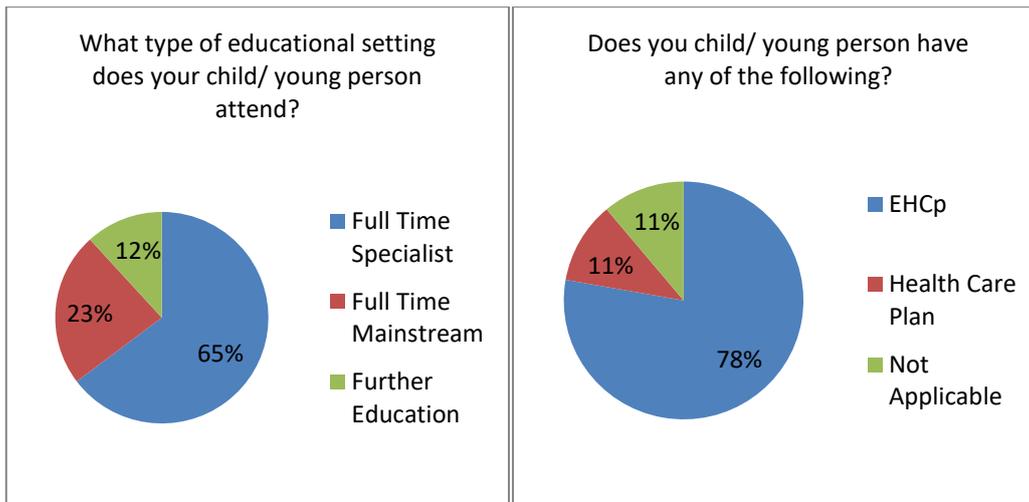


Fig.3 Educational Setting

Fig. 4 Educational Support

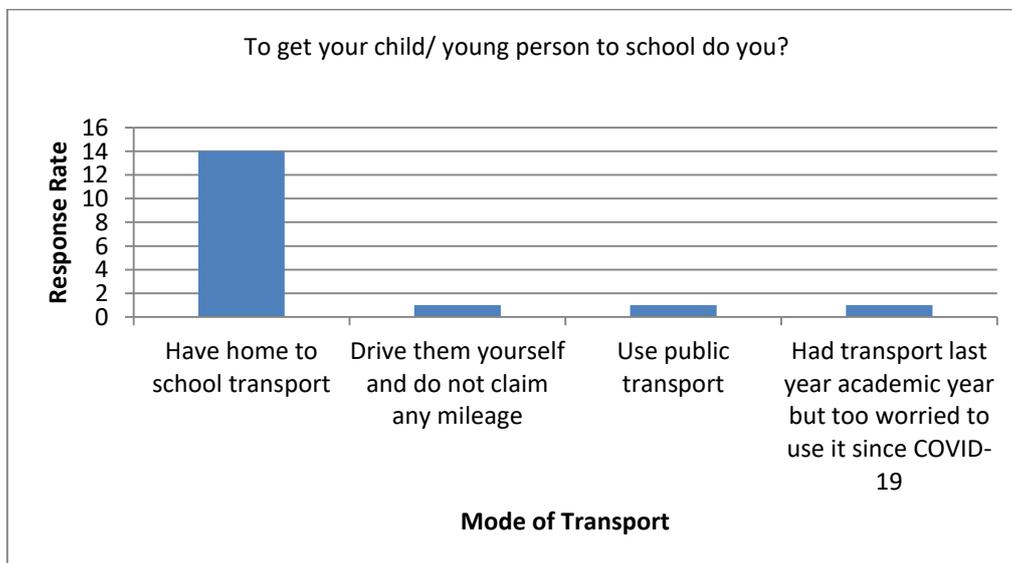


Fig.5 How Parents Get CYP To School

In the survey parents were presented with a range of options of how they got their children/ young people (CYP) to school with home to school transport being one option as shown in figure 5 and this was the most frequently chosen option.

To further establish some of the themes occurring in the face book discussions further questions on the survey were:

- When first applying for home to school transport did you know what to do?
- If you child/ young person uses home to school transport is this the first year they have done so?
- If your child/ young person has used home to school transport before please tell us for how long

The responses to which are in figures 7, 8 and 9, and from which figure 8 shows that for over 65% home school transport has been used in previous years.

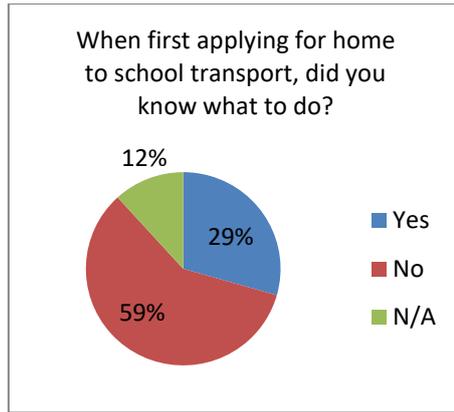


Fig.7 Applying for transport

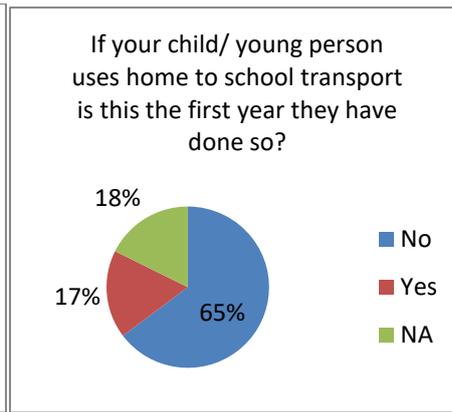


Fig.8 Years using transport

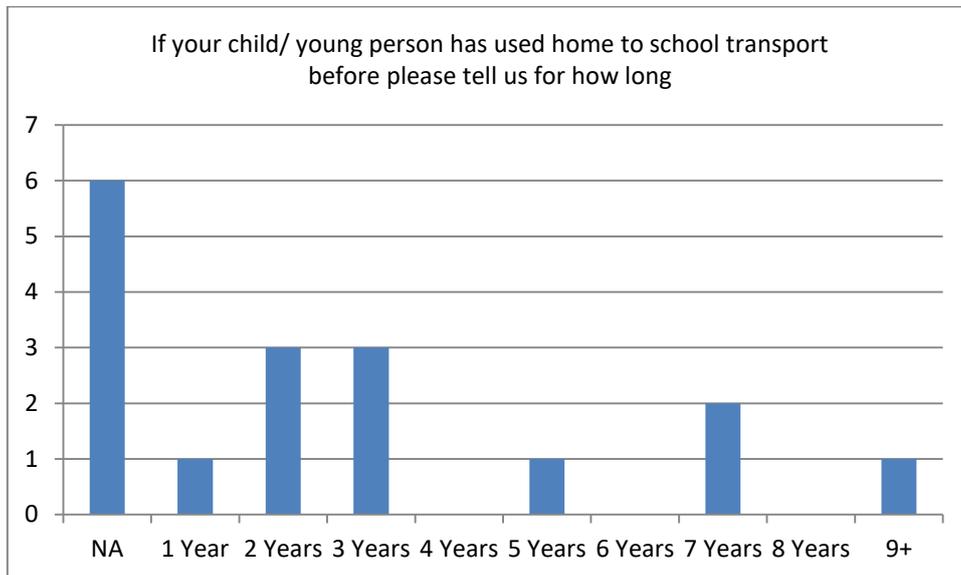


Fig. 9 Length of Time Using Transport

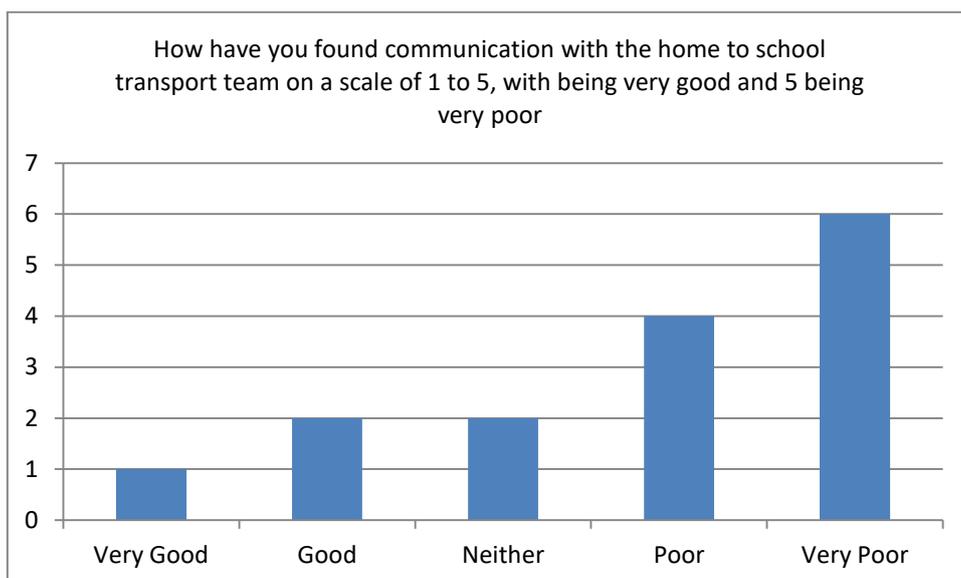


Fig. 10 Satisfaction with communication

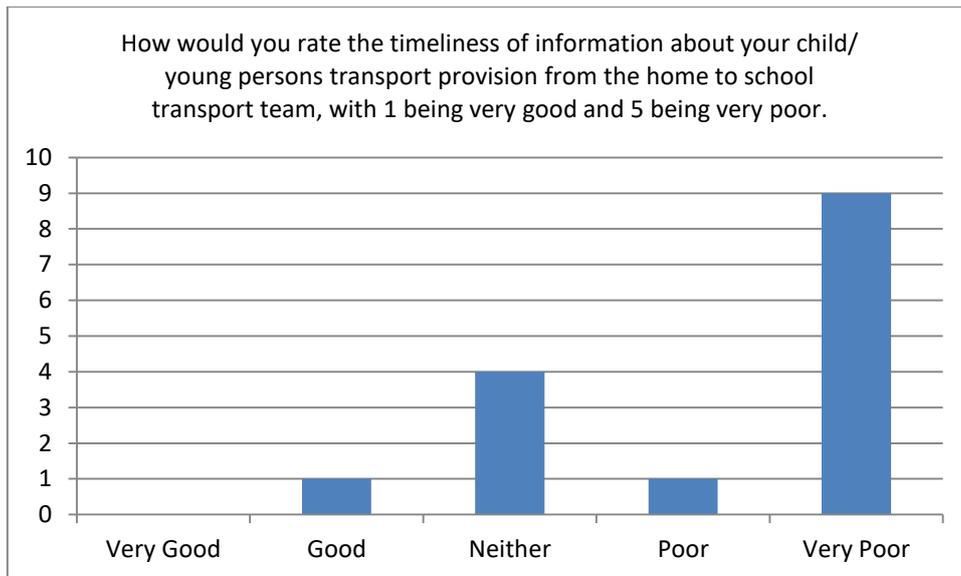


Fig. 11 Timeliness of communication

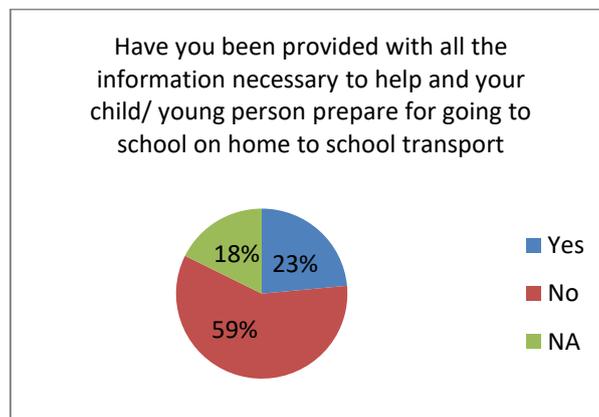


Fig.12 Information Provision

Figures 10 to 12 and the evidence from the discussions and open questions show a level of dissatisfaction with transport provision in terms communication about whether a CYP will receive transport, when they will be collected and by whom.

Parental Comments

1. Sometimes a little frustrating with timing but on the whole it is a complete life saver for us and we are really grateful for it.
2. We were initially denied transport as they said we lived too close to the school. This was despite several neighbour's children attending the same school & accessing transport. Our school eventually sorted this for us. The bus is never on time & has been cancelled several times with the call advising of cancellation coming after the bus should have picked my child up. Alternative transport has been provided but this has left my child waiting at the bus stop for long periods. Receiving transport updates are always short notice.

3. We have lovely supervisors and drivers on our bus
4. Process was very easy but lack of communication as to who would be taking them was non-existent. On his first day on transport. They didn't have adequate seating. Only a 5 point booster seat which is too small. So had to have seatbelt. Which is not adequate to keep him seated?
5. It caused me and my disabled child so much stress!!! We found out about the transport a night before which is simply not good enough. I have applied well in advance and even though I have had a phone call to say they are sorting it nothing was actually getting done. Made a numerous phone calls, sent them emails with no response. Very frustrating. My child was asking questions that I was unable to answer which led to sleepless nights and behavioural difficulties.
6. It was good when used last year
7. Changing drivers chaperones without telling having random people come to collect my child (i don't send her in on transport then), Very impatient school end, Late pick up, Not interested in risks and needs of child, Drives fast
8. did not receive covid survey only got details for transport 2 days after it restarted
9. Why do they always send the information so late? I mean a couple of days before school opens isn't good enough. Every year it's the same issues.
10. Emails unanswered. When I got through to speak to someone they brushed off my request for my son to have a photo of or meet the escort/driver of the transport. As this is my sons first time on school transport.
11. We had no information no letter no phone call no email
12. So far this year I have had no formal confirmation that transport was being provided. It is and taxi turned up although on the wrong day during her first week. I did manage to get an answer by phoning about 10 days prior to start of term and was told a letter would follow. Particularly tricky this year as she is now in supported accommodation.
13. When my daughter moved from school to College last year I didn't know that she needed to reapply from scratch. She had had transport throughout secondary education and I was prompted to reapply each year, but those prompts stopped when she left school and there was a flurry of activity at the start of term and a week at least of no transport.
14. The service is generally good once you get it but the communication is chaotic
15. I had to chase up 2 days prior to him returning to school as we had heard nothing regarding who was picking him up, what time etc
16. Terrible so far.
17. First day didnt turn up, phoned to find out why and was told he had been picked up!! He was standing next to me while I was making call.

As a way to further facilitate improvement in communication and service experience the final question asked for “**What improvements do you feel could be made to make things easier when using home to school transport?**” and the following are a selection of the answers that were provided:

1. Better organisation & pre-planning. Earlier communication.
2. Photos/picture of staff on transport would have been useful. Having correct method of securing my child in his seat.

3. Timelines and communication is a key! And this can be easily improved.
4. Proper introduction of driver and chaperone before collecting child.
5. Chaperones that understand risk and what to look out for.
6. more communication more people manning the phone lines
7. Get the info out early enough.
8. Drivers and escorts should be sensitised on the types of passengers they are carrying and how to deal with them as none of them have a clue whatsoever.
9. Communication with parents
10. Earlier communication with parents

Where FVP have shared this talking point

1. FVP Website
2. FVP Social Media Channels
3. FVP E-News
4. Peterborough City Council Decision Makers

Next Steps and Areas for Consideration

1. For PCC to produce a FAQ based on the questions parents ask year on year and place this on the Local Offer.
2. For PCC to provide information to parents on the process and timescales around home to school transport procurement and post this on the Local Offer.
3. For PCC to aim to give parents at least one week notice of their CYP's home to school transport arrangements (provider, pick-up/collection time) at the start of the new autumn term.

Timescales

Generally the aim is for Topics of Importance to have a three month turnaround time, between initial discussions with the Local Authority and response being published

Potential FAQ's