

SEND Home to School Taxi Transport Parent Survey Results 2016



**achieving
for children**

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Introduction

Achieving for Children is a community interest company that has been managing children's services since 2014 for The Royal Borough of Kingston and always strives to provide excellent service to families.

Most children are able to get to and from school by walking, cycling or using public transport. In some cases, children may share car journeys with friends and family. However, a few children will not be able to make this journey without help and the council may provide transport assistance in these cases

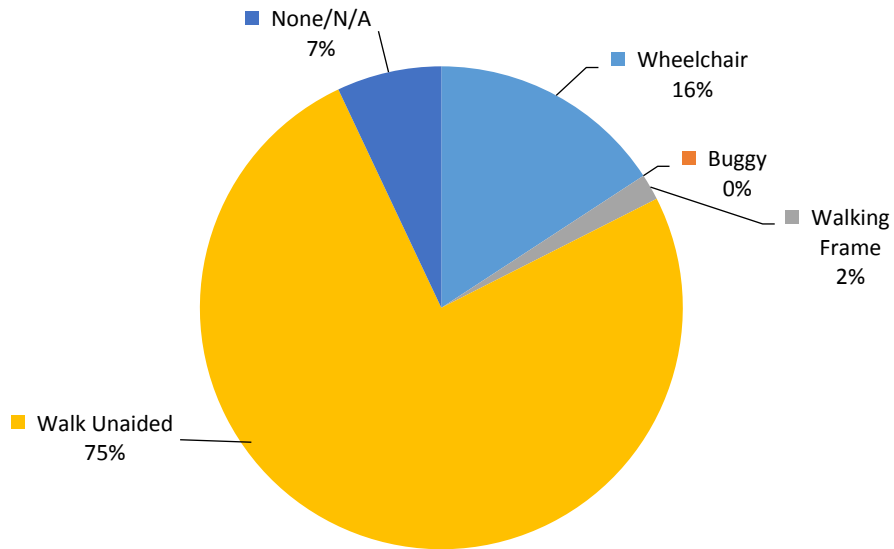
The local authority promotes inclusive opportunities to enable people with additional needs fulfil their educational and social potential. This includes joint working between pupils, parents, and the school. The local authority encourages independence wherever possible, providing transport support to pupils appropriate to their assessed needs.

In order for us to find out how we believe we are doing and what areas we need to improve upon a survey was sent out to all parents who were using taxi transport in May 2016.

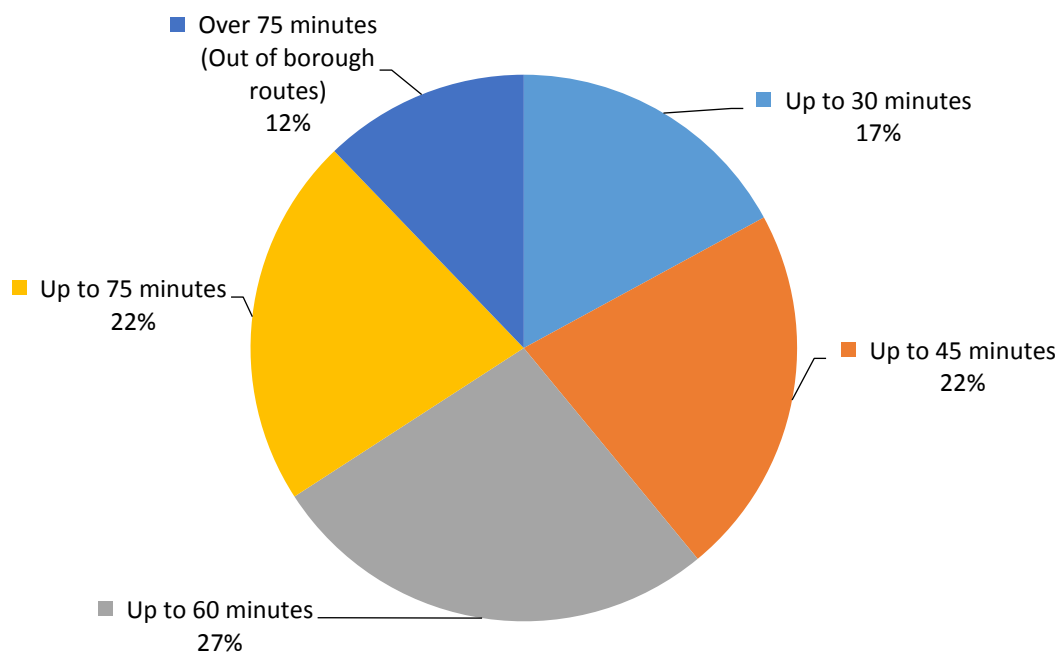
Another SEND Transport survey will be sent out in the next academic year across both The Royal Borough of Kingston and London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Results

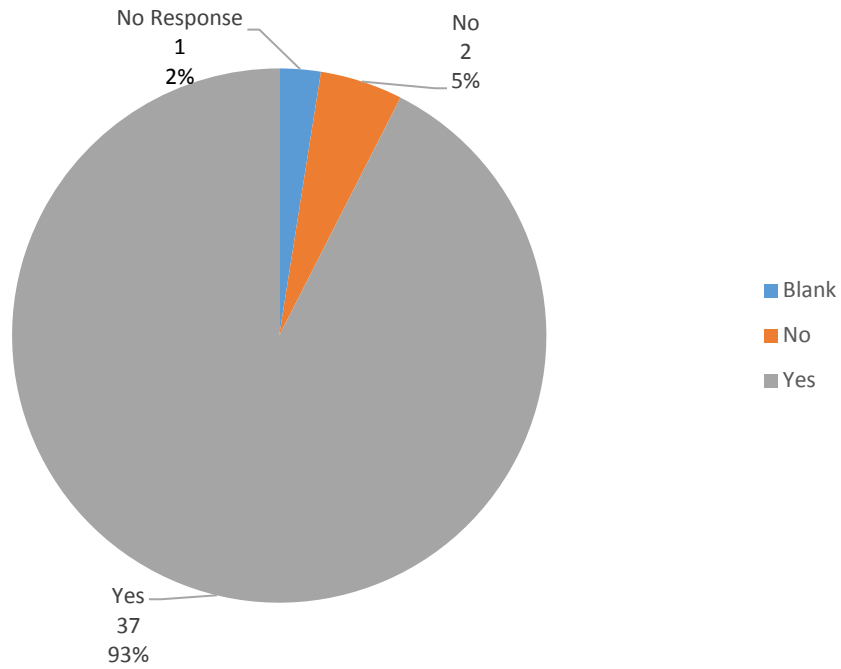
Question 1: Please let us know if you child uses any of the following mobility equipment?



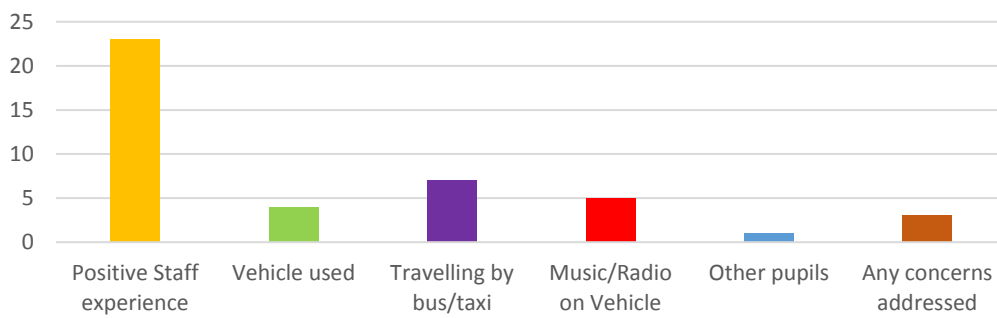
Question 2: Please could you let us know how long your child is on the vehicle for each journey



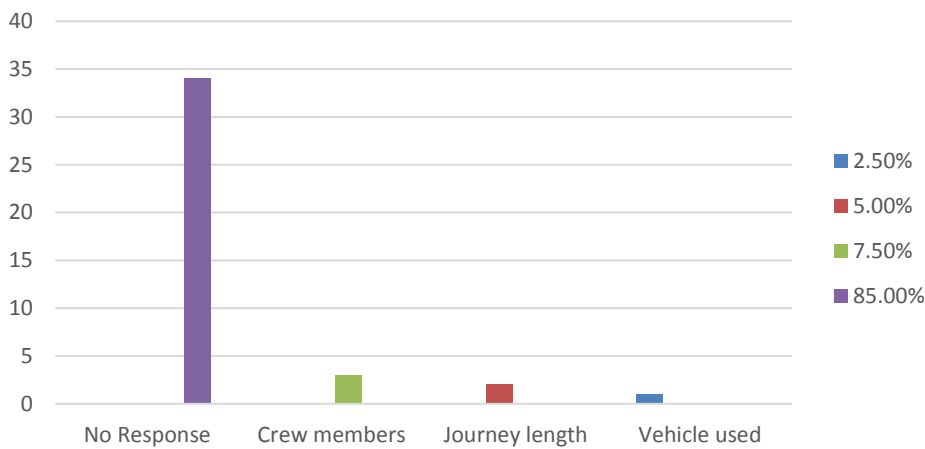
Question 3: Can you let us know if your child enjoys their journeys?



Question 4: If you have answered 'Yes' to the above question, please tell us what makes your child's journey happy

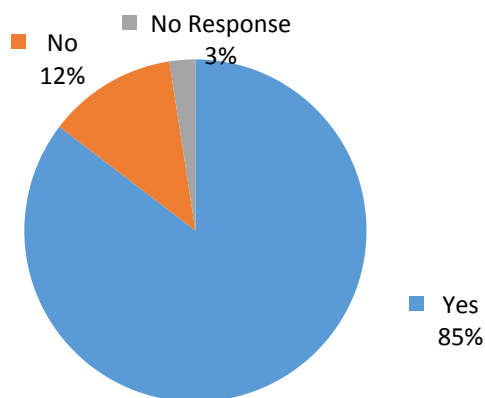


Question 5: Perhaps more importantly for us, if you have answered 'No' to the above question, please tell us what makes your child's journey unhappy?



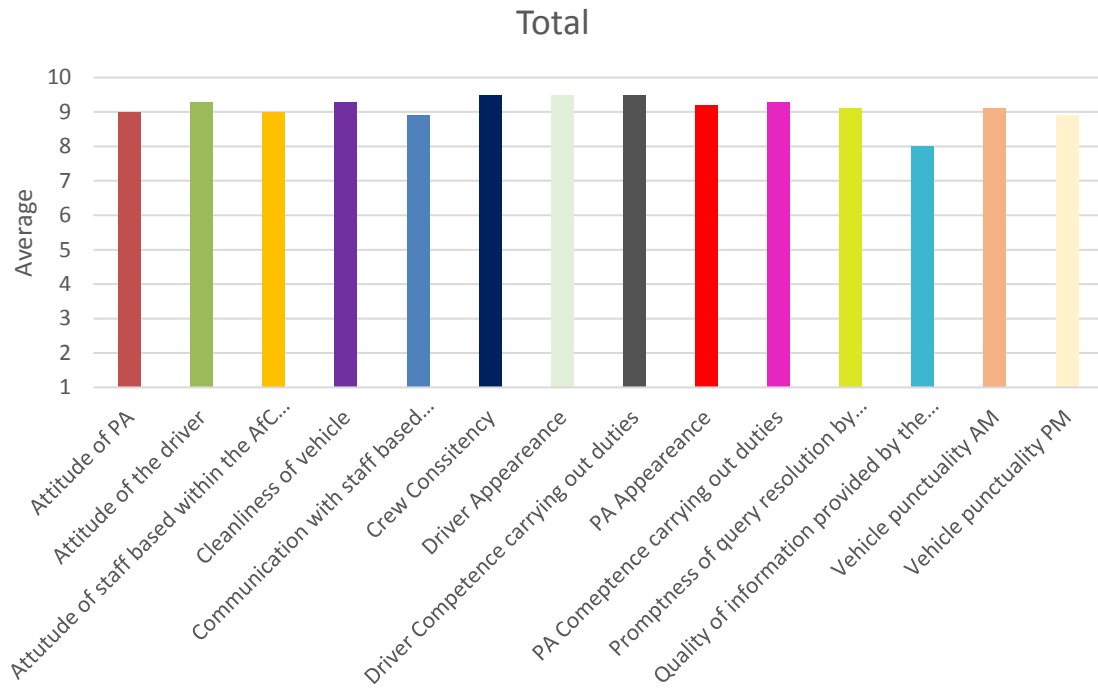
Only eight replies were received to this question to say they were unhappy.

Question 6: Do you feel that the communication between you and the crew is pleasant and that you can depend upon the crew to correctly pass on any important messages to/from the school about your child?

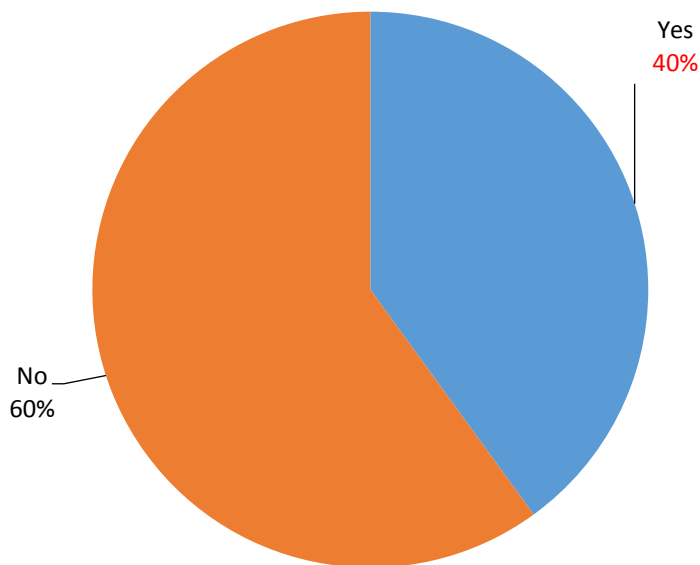


If you have answered 'No' to question 6, please give an example where this has not worked for you. (See answers in 'things we can do better')

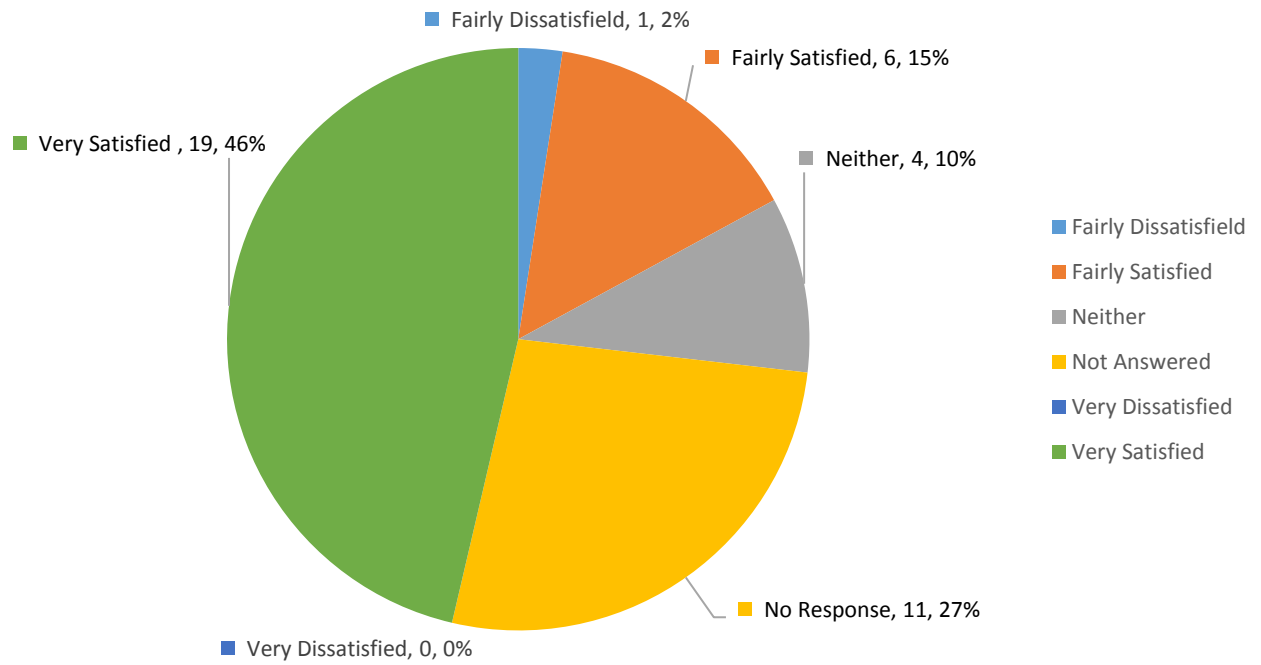
Question 7: Please help us by rating the following aspects:



Question 8: Have you ever had reason to contact the AfC SEND Transport Office about any concerns?



Question 9: If you answered yes to question 9, please let us know if your concerns were considered by staff in a satisfactorily manner and timeframe.



Feedback

The following comments have been taken from this survey. Where a child's name has been mentioned, we have added a * to keep the survey anonymous.

Things we do well

- Meeting his friends in the bus and usual similar faces. The atmosphere on the bus seems calming and joyful. Happy when he sits next or opposite to his closest friend.
- Same driver for last two years, very friendly and flexible with collection times as my son has several afterschool classes for GCSE subjects. The driver most importantly is always on time and is very responsible on all journeys to and from school.
- My son has non-verbal autism so difficult to know how much he enjoys the journey, although he is usually quite happy when he gets off the school bus.
- My son's driver has always been on time and is very kind and calm lady - all the things * needs, to stay calm and focus before school.
- Consistent driver who is friendly and welcoming.
- Is non-verbal, so it's hard to know for sure but he is always happy to travel to and from school. I think the taxi driver and escort play music. They know * needs pots with him and prepare for the journey by taking them in the car. * is not happy when the journey is really long or slow due to traffic and can become very challenging. This is beyond anyone's control.
- Generally happy travelling in vehicles.
- Enjoys the movement of the car.
- Playing music that he likes. Sitting at the front seats behind the driver as he can see more. Escort is not too 'in his face' and doesn't treat him as a child.
- * likes going to school.
- My child is happy having a chat with friends and listening to music during journey.
- The driver on his route is very friendly and understanding if there are any problems.
- The chaperone makes it lots of fun and plays him music.
- We have a wonderful escort. DVD player in the car. His twp best friends travel with him.
- He likes his taxi driver and escort.
- Likes the driver as he is always on time and very reliable.
- His driver welcomes him every morning. My son seems very happy and looks forward to seeing his driver. My son enjoys his journey every day.
- My son is autistic, he enjoys when he is in motion that is why he likes the school bus.
- His driver, is a very nice man and makes things as comfortable as possible for * - such as positioning of his bags, etc.

- Chaperone is really lovely and * really likes her. Is clear she gets and understands what's going on with him.
- He gets on well with the driver and the escort and loves to sit by the window and look out.
- Same seat every day, same driver and escort music in the bus punctual.
- Consistent driver that my child is comfortable with.
- I trust this team! Very important. Bus is a happy place, in the van, with driver and crew interacting with the children well. Music is played and generally a good jolly atmosphere. But one recent pupil has been challenging at times, which does affect atmosphere and other children, who get upset.

Also, crew is confident, and my child sits in his usual seat always. The whole crew has a gentle caring manner about them, making sure children are comfortable and we communicate between ourselves really well. My son looks forward to the bus and happily jumps on, usually with a smile - it says it all. This team (three years) is a complete change from previous team, which was always miserable, they never communicated, even acknowledged a hello - wish there had been a survey then three to four years ago - so (took incident to finally hear) could have been heard!

- Driver and escort, both the above people take utmost care to make journey for * as comfortable as possible.
- Easily and quickly transported. Feel safe during rush hour.
- Likes the people she is on the bus with and likes the fact they are the same people including her escort and driver.
- Kid's comradery. Friendly driver. Consistent driver.
- Enjoys journeys. He loves to travel in the bus. He feels safe and comfortable inside. Sometimes, he sings a song and usually he laughs getting into the bus
- The journey is okay for them. It would be useful for them if they escort can sign language.
- The journey happened normally.
- The assistant is lovely and understands when my child wants to talk and when he doesn't. They play music for them and he is quite happy.
- The driver and escort make the journey for my child. She enjoys the music and interaction with the escort.
- Our son takes his headphones along with his phone or tablet, so he can either have his music playing or watch a film or TV pre-loaded on his tablet. He also gets on well with his driver.
- She gets on very well with the crew members like (the driver) and also the (escort lady) who is kind and understanding with her and the other children on the travel bus. Also my daughter can have her phone on with games to play which is helps her to make to journey happy for her and wear headphones for music to listen to.

- Quite enjoys journeys to school because he is picked up last so the journey is only 20-30 minutes. This is short enough for him to sit in a normal seat in the bus if necessary. (Any longer and he suffers from pain in his back). It is also the start of the day so he is quite refreshed and doesn't mind being on the bus.
- Cannot fault the driver or company, (I think Cheam Cars) would always ring if there was a change of driver, even if the driver was going to be later due to traffic. Very pleasant easy to understand, as I said could not fault them at all. * will miss the driver when they finish. :) (Happy Mummy).
- Very satisfied with female employee whenever there were issues. The male employee I found was not so capable at solving these. I would not deal with him again.
- Our child has not been an easy child to transport to school. We had a lot of difficulties at the start, but this crew has really cracked it and he is happy - most mornings - to go off happily due to the excellent assistance. It is not always good, but that is due to the child.
- My only concern is the changing of drivers. When my son gets used to his driver then the company changes. I understand sometimes drivers leave or get promotion, but above all you all are providing quality service. Thank you.
- I would have absolutely no hesitations in recommending Brunswick. I think they are excellent. We are very happy with, *'s driver - he is fantastic. Really understanding and helpful. Claire has also been brilliant and very helpful.
- We mostly had to deal only with the driver and transport assistant and both have been excellent with us and *.
- Driver excellent and really fun and good attitude. Understands how to deal with the children.
- In all honestly, no, as I feel the driver and lady escort are the best crew members of my daughter's travel transport and are very good and helpful in all aspects from any changes happening beforehand and present time of what's going on at the time if any problems on the bus.
- I don't have anything to say, it is all great, what they all do. I think they are fantastic, for my grandson. Love it, what more can I say. When I ring up the transport office, always make their way to pick him up, when he is off sick, so they great.

Things we could do better

Journey times

Unfortunately, traffic is something which is outside our control and to avoid road works, crews will sometimes have to divert from their usual routes.

In-borough schools have a maximum journey time of 75 minutes. Unfortunately, out-of-borough schools do not have the same time restraints. In cases where pupils are travelling to out-borough schools, and where parents feel that journey times are excessive, we would look into the pickup and drop off order of the route to ensure the route is being run as effectively as possible. We would also monitor the route for a short period, logging the departure times from school and each child's drop off time daily, to consider an average journey time. We have often found, particularly where several children are sharing transport that it can take 10 or so minutes to have all the young people seated with their belts on ready for the journey. We have also found that schools can occasionally cause delays by not having children ready to leave on time, leading to later drop offs.

SEND Transport supports our taxi companies in their allocated pick up and drop off arrangements. Pick up and drop off arrangements tend to be first pick up and last drop off on the majority of routes as this approach creates the most efficient journey for all the pupils on board.

To provide a simple example, if we have three young people living in homes A, B & C along a long road, with the school at the end of this road, sitting in the position of "D", it makes sense to collect all the pupils in the order A then B then C and then on to school. After collecting the pupils in the afternoon, the route would drop the children home in the order C then B then A. If the crew were to drop off in the order ABC, this would be unfair on C, as they live closest to the school, and the crew would have to drive past C's home to drop A off first. C would end up being on transport for a lot longer than A would have been if they had dropped off CBA. The second option also creates more mileage, cost and pollution, and it would cause distress for children to drive past their homes and not be dropped off, which could I turn lead to challenging behaviour in the vehicle.

If you would like us to look into your child's journey times, please make contact with our office on 020 8547 4708 so we can start monitoring this route.

Food on the vehicle

Our policy confirms to parents that, for the health and safety of their children, young people are not allowed to eat in the vehicles, mainly as this could be a choking hazard if the driver ever needed to perform an emergency stop, but also as any food on the vehicle could lead to an allergic reaction.

Crews

We always encourage our crews to engage with the young people traveling on the vehicle and to be friendly and cheery, both when they greet children and families in the morning, and when they say goodbye in the afternoons. Transport is an important ingredient in their school day. If transport goes badly in the morning, it can take children longer to start

engaging with activities after arriving at school, and if transport goes badly in the afternoon, it can have a massive effect on the entire family.

We ask all our transport companies to provide fixed crew members for each route, and we make every effort to ensure that the same passenger assistant and driver continue to transport pupils. However this isn't always possible and changes may be needed from time to time (for example, to cover sickness, attendance at funerals, vehicle breakdowns) and where we may need to change the crew in order to make the most efficient use of available resources.

Our transport providers will contact parents to give them as much notice as possible if a crew member is going to change, either temporarily or permanently. Unfortunately, due to sickness and other circumstances, you may sometimes be informed about these changes at very short notice.

Where crews are struggling to know how to manage a young person on transport, in most cases schools work very closely with us to help provide some training and guidance to the transport crews, to give them an understanding of how to react and the best strategies they can use to keep the children as calm and happy as possible. Where there is a young person travelling who is non-verbal, and who communicates by using sign language (either Makaton or British Sign Language), we will usually ask parents and the school to teach the passenger assistant some of the most important signs, so that they will be able to interact with the young person on the vehicle.

Please call us on 020 8547 4708 if you have any concerns about crew members so that it can be dealt with very quickly.

Play dates and clubs

We fully support play dates and are happy to arrange changes to transport to accommodate this in most cases. However, safeguarding is a top priority for all agencies working with children, and so any changes to transport must be agreed in advance by email by both sets of parents to ensure that we have consent for the children to be dropped to different addresses. Apologies if this discourages you from arranging play dates, but we would not only need the consents in place, but we would also need to inform the taxi company about the changes, so that they can check the feasibility of dropping to the different address, and then inform the crew.

The local authority does not have a duty to provide transport to accommodate optional school clubs which some children may want to take part in. Where a child shares transport, if they would like to attend a school club either before or after their school day, separate privately funded transport arrangements would need to be made by the family to support this arrangement. However, if all the children travelling together would like to attend the same club(s), we are able to be flexible and alter the timings of the drop-offs to and collections from school without this incurring additional cost for AfC.

If you would like us to consider transport for a school club that your child would like to attend, and you know at that all the children travelling in their shared vehicle would also like to attend, please get in touch with us on 020 8547 4708, and we discuss the possibility of us arranging transport to accommodate this.

Behaviour of other children on the routes

Any challenging behaviour should be reported to us so that, where necessary, we can put transport on hold for that individual while we gather reports from the crew members and liaise with the school and parents to find a way to help manage the behaviours seen on transport.

Lateness of routes

Times can vary so we are very sorry to hear how much you have been affected by this. Please contact us on 020 8547 4708 if you would like us to look into your route to see if there is anything we can do to reduce this lateness.

All crew members are expected to engage with the young people on the vehicle in a kind and polite manner.

Text alerts

Unfortunately, AfC and the taxi companies do not have a text alert system in cases where there are delays. In these situations, we would expect the transport companies to call parents or for the passenger assistants to make contact with parents, but unfortunately PAs may be dealing with other passengers in the vehicle and may not be able to get in touch. If there has been a major accident, or if there are major delays, then it is likely that the transport office will be extremely busy, with making calls and telephone enquiries, and in these cases, they may not have staff members available to call parents to inform them.

Response to parents

Thank you to all those who took the time to respond to the survey. We continue to strive to offer an outstanding service, which is reflected in the positive feedback we received.

Some areas were highlighted where families felt we could do better.

We are focused on these areas and are making improvements where we can. However, overall, we are very pleased with the result of the survey and thank you for your continued support.

Conclusion

AfC continuously strives to provide the best possible service to families, and is reassured that the majority of parents who responded to this survey were very pleased with the service that we deliver.

AfC always encourages parents to give us feedback, whether positive or negative and by working on the areas where parents have said we could do better, we will be able to improve and develop our service into the best we can make it.

We always endeavour for families to have reasonable journey times according to our policy and are happy to look into them again if parents have concerns, but some journeys to out-borough schools may be longer than others and encounter more traffic on a day-to-day basis.

Crews are always encouraged to engage with the children on the vehicle and are expected to behave appropriately on the vehicle. If this is not happening, we encourage families to let us know as soon as possible so that we can investigate and handle the situation accordingly. This may lead to the crew receiving extra training, or in some cases it may lead to AfC putting a new crew onto the route.

All taxi routes run by AfC have spot checks carried out at least once a year to ensure that the service specification is being followed by the all of the taxi companies.

AfC would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for taking the time to respond to this year's survey. All comments and feedback are always valued. However, please remember that you don't need to wait for a survey to raise any concerns that you have, please telephone our office on 020 8547 4708 to discuss any problems or queries that you have.

We will conduct another survey covering Kingston and Richmond in the spring of 2018.

