



Review of SEND Transport

In April 2018 Young Healthwatch South Tyneside and Your Voice Counts setup a transition sub group with parents and carers of young people with Special Educational needs in South Tyneside to ensure they were given an independent voice for their children and inform changes to services within South Tyneside.

The group come together BI monthly and is chaired independently by Tara Johnson (Engagement Officer at Young Healthwatch South Tyneside).

After the first few meetings it was evident that a key issue was Transport provision for children with SEND and the type of service parents were receiving posed some issues for some parents and carers and these needed to be addressed to improve the quality of service being provided.

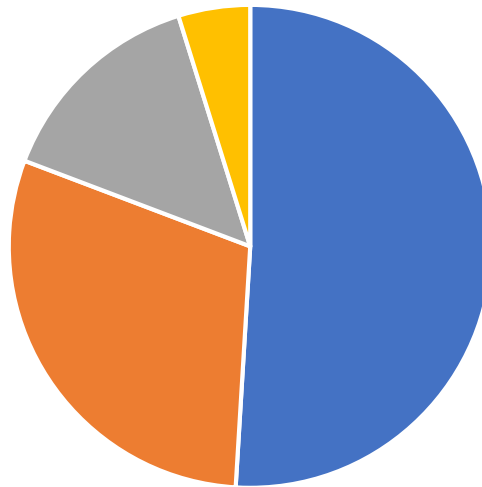
What did Young Healthwatch do?

Young Healthwatch and Your Voice Counts held a meeting with South Tyneside Council's transport team and parents and carers to open up a partnership dialogue

The key areas were:

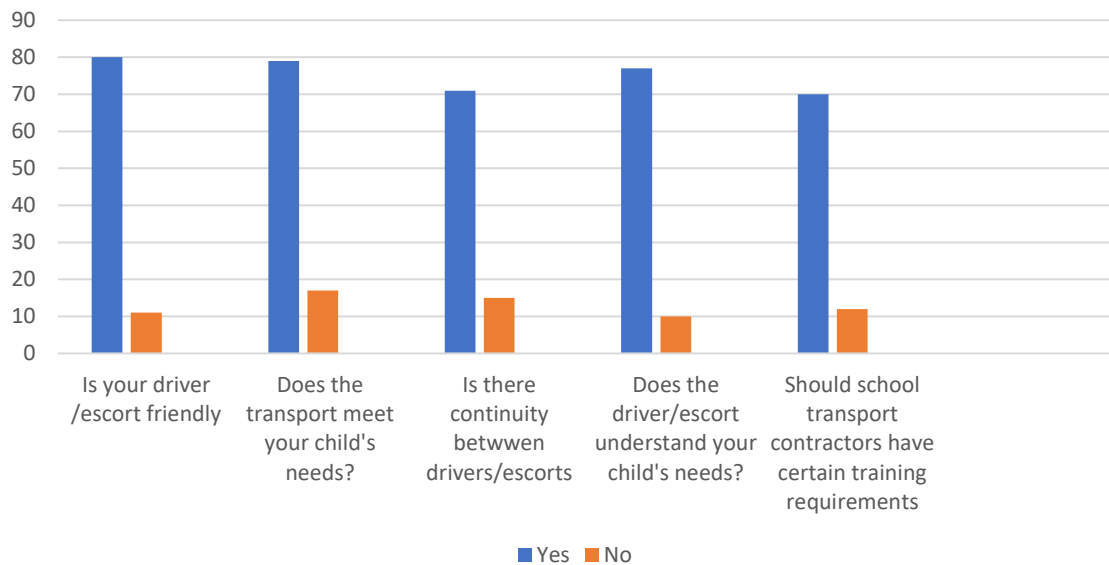
- An over complicated application process with transport provision being allocated to children and young people too late
- Parents/carers feeling scared to feed negative experiences into the council for fear of losing their provision
- Inconsistency in drivers, escorts and pick up times
- Drivers and escorts not knowing a child's needs, likes or dislikes.
- Lack of training and regular quality checks.

Does the transport arrive on time?



■ All of the time ■ Most of the time 31 ■ hardly ever ■ never

Your SEND home to school transport experience



■ Yes ■ No

What we did to help improve the transport service

The work Young Healthwatch completed to improve the SEND transport process and service was split into two areas:

1. Review and improve the application process and information available for both parents/carers and transport providers.
2. Produce a questionnaire and review experiences of parents/carers who are using SEND home to school transport.

Review and improve the application process and the information available

Following the work that Young Healthwatch completed with parents and discussions with the transport team around SEND home to school transport we have supported the transport team to implement the following improvements:

- Give parents and carers an independent route to make a complaint and help them address the issues they were having with transport
- A new simple application form, earlier deadline for applications to ensure quicker allocation of transport provision
- A new review form designed by parents to shorten the application process for those that re-apply for transport each year
- A new “All about Me” form was designed to find out about a child’s likes/dislikes, triggers or emergency medication to help drivers have more information about a child in their care
- An information leaflet has been produced to improve communication providing information to parents and carers about the eligibility and expectations from them and the transport service.

The findings from our transport questionnaire

A group of parents /carers that use SEND transport helped us identify 5 questions about the transport service they are provided (See graphs for the questions that were asked).

We had 80 responses from parents and carers that access SEND home to school transport across South Tyneside.

When asking parents if their transport arrived on time. Over half that we spoke to told us that their transport arrives on time all of the time. However, 30%

told us it either hardly ever does or never arrives on time and responses are inconsistent.

Parents overall felt their child's escort and driver was friendly and that there was continuity between drivers.

Again, overall parents felt the transport met their child's needs and the driver and escort understood their child's needs. Areas that parents felt could be improved were:

- The length of time some young people are on the bus can be too long for some children with complex needs and this needs to be better assessed
- Some drivers need more information about a child's needs before they are given the contract

Lastly when parents were asked about the training needs of drivers 70 parents told us that they felt drivers and escorts should have certain training requirements. The key training parents felt drivers should have was:

- First Aid
- Safeguarding
- SEND behaviour training
- Autism Awareness

Future Recommendations

- Following inconsistent pick up times found in our questionnaire South Tyneside transport team should consider implementing spot checks that look at the quality of the service being delivered including pick up times
- Commissioners and stakeholders should consider mandatory training for drivers and escorts such as First Aid, Safeguarding, SEND awareness
- The transport team encouraging the use of the "All about Me" form at the start of September to ensure drivers know a child's likes or dislikes
- Improvements need to be made when allocating those with more complex needs to ensure they are not on school transport for long periods of time.
- Commissioners and partners within South Tyneside to continue to work with Healthwatch and parent and carers to ensure the services they are offering are working for people within South Tyneside that are using them.