

Service User Concerns

Concerns directly relating to health and safety:

Safety Whilst Travelling

I am so worried about my son going into the taxi in the morning. He has very complex needs and I do not feel the driver and escort fully understand her medical condition. I have tried talking to them but they do not understand me. He has medicine in case of emergencies but I don't know if they would know what to do with it. He is very fragile and until I know he is safe in school I worry. I get very emotional.

My child was transported to a SEBD with three other children going to the same school. They all struggle to sit for the (rather long) journey and often my son comes home with scratches and bruises caused by scuffles in the cab. Because of the number of passengers they have to sit next to each other, which really doesn't work. Just because they go to the same school, doesn't mean that they should have to travel together, it really doesn't seem safe to me.

My daughter took the taxi last year and she had to sit in the middle in the back, of a smallish car, with another child in a car seat one side, and a largish(without being rude!) chaperone on the other. My daughter told me that she didn't want to take the taxi as she was squashed and the car smelt. I did take this matter up with county, and was not satisfied how it was resolved. I had to take my daughter to school myself for 2 months until they were prepared to put on a larger taxi.

My child has no verbal communication and is being transported to school with children who have behavioural difficulties, and an escort who doesn't speak English. I am so worried things could be happening in that car that he isn't able to tell me. The other children are really noisy and fidgety, I feel scared just putting my son in the car in the morning.

I noticed a taxi with three children in it dropping off a child in my road. The driver double parked in the road, got out and took one child to the house, whilst leaving the other two unattended in the car! There was no other adult with him!

Staff and Training

I am concerned that the taxi staff and escorts are not trained in dealing with my child's specific needs, or how to deal with several children at once all with differing conditions. No-one talks to parents or involves them in any training, and yet they are the experts on their child!

How do we know that taxi's and minibuses are road worthy etc? Read a lot in paper about Aylesbury taxis not being roadworthy. Also drivers - how do we know that is the driver that's pictured on the I.D?

I was told by Amey that their transport staff would receive training, and it would take two years to get everyone trained. I'm shocked that firstly the drivers and escorts aren't trained already, and secondly my child could be transported for the next two years by untrained people! Also, what is this training, and how do I know it is enough for them to be able to deal with my son and his specific needs which are very complex. Even school staff liaise with me as the "expert" as they are not always sure how to handle him or what to do in certain situations - so what hope is there for a taxi driver and an escort?

Vehicle Safety

My daughter has severe speech and language delays and generally she could not be understood by the driver, and vice versa, as the driver also did not speak very good English. For a child with special needs communication is vital!

Time Issues

My son's taxi never turns up on time. Sometimes it is nearly 30 minutes late and she gets very anxious and worried about being late. He has autism and needs things to be on time as much as possible! The problem is also made worse because sometimes they use different cars, different escorts and different drivers, we never know what or who to expect. On three occasions last term it never turned up at all.

I was told by Amey that my child would not be in the taxi for more than 45mins. She regularly is in the car an hour or more, due to traffic and the route they take. This means for over 2hrs a day she is in a car, which isn't appropriate for a child with ADHD, who struggles to sit still. If they didn't transport other children in the same vehicle it wouldn't take this long.

I had to wait far too long for transport to be sorted out for my child – it took ages to get a space on a bus! This has caused anxiety and worry for all of us, especially my child.

I want to know why when you inform transport that your child is sick in enough time, they are still coming, wasting time, petrol etc and still inconveniencing us by ringing the bell and disturbing my child even when we have rang them on the mobile or company number? Surely this is not good use of money or time, and why should we inform them if they ignore what we tell them?

Concerns indirectly relating to safeguarding:

Customer Service Issues

I've tried complaining to Amey about our taxi service to school, but nothing has been done. It is very hard to talk to anyone, and they just fob you off by saying they are looking into it. How long does it take?

Jim Waddington came to some parent meetings in the Summer and said lots of things, but I'm not seeing them happening. I've complained about the poor service, but not had any response; the staff are unhelpful. I was told we would have a transport group where he would come and talk to us again and answer our concerns, but it has still not happened. The Parent Participation Worker said she is finding it very hard to contact him directly. Are they actually bothered about hearing from parents at all?

Eligibility for transport (BCC responsibility)

My son has always had transport to Pebble Brook School that is within the 3 mile radius, unfortunately as he is going into year 10 Keystage 4, he has now lost it, the school saying he is more than capable of finding his own way to and from school. He is one of the more capable children within that school, but nonetheless, it is a special school and he is there for a reason.

The walk that my son will have to take to school means he has to encounter 3 major roads that are exceptionally busy during the peak hours. The taxi driver who used to collect him (he only ever went in the mornings) says that he will still be going past our front door with other children, yet still County refuse to let my son on their transport. I even appealed against their decision but the answer was still no.

I have told them of my worries regarding the safety of the roads in peak hours, I have only ever asked for transport 1 way, I have offered to pay for the transport, I explained that this will result in my son either taking himself of maybe into town before school as he doesn't understand the importance of time, he will be late for school, that both his father nor I are not in a position to give up work and yet they still wont help us.

MY QUESTION IS: Why do they ever offer it in the first place if through the child's education they intend to take it away? These children already have significant unrest in their lives for County Council Transport to add to them! They may be reducing their costs, but at the risk of our children's safety!

Influence of cost of transport on choice of education

Transport cost should never be an issue for a disabled/statemented child but incorporated as a matter of course whenever they are schooled i.e. not influence statement or decision.

Eligibility for transport to parental choice of school

Whilst county mad deem a local school capable of dealing with a child's specific needs quite often the parent has a better understanding on their child and will choose a school accordingly. In that case transport should be offered by County albeit perhaps with parents contributing to cost. Currently parents have to arrange and pay the whole cost, which could prevent children going to the most appropriate school.

Eligibility for transport to respite services

Why can't transport be offered to/from respite care during school holidays? I am unable to arrange transport for school so it is provided, so why can't transport be provided for respite as this is also arranged by the Council, to help the family and my child?

Eligibility for passenger assistant

I would like to know the criteria for declining an escort for my 5yrs old daughter who has a statement for speech and language with acquired brain injury. I stressed during the risk assessment that my daughter has no safety awareness which was clearly highlighted on her statement. I have to keep going with her on her transport to school because it is not safe on her own and am not happy she will be on her own with the driver. My daughter is not aware of setting boundaries with strangers as she has to relearn her lost skills.

Eligibility for transport with siblings

Children with a statement should be given priority on school bus services if they are able to travel independently, particularly if a sibling is already on that bus. Currently transport do not apply the same rules as schools for places, but issue them on a first come, first served basis. What do transport not apply the same principles re: SEN? What about their wellbeing?

Eligibility for transport on mainstream services

Transport for a child with a disability/specific learning difficulties is important, however some could cope with general school transport and it would provide them with a safe, structured way to and from school which would in turn help them develop some sense of independence.