

SEND Transport – Parent Carer Feedback Analysis

North Northamptonshire | September 2026

Purpose: To provide North Northamptonshire Council's Transport Team with a structured analysis of recent parent-carer feedback about SEND transport, highlighting strengths, recurring concerns, potential risks and the information/data requested to support service improvement.

SEND survey data :-

SEND Transport	105→114	27.6%→44.7%	+17.1 pp	40.0%→36.0%	-4.0 pp	Clearest positive movement, but mixed
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1. Summary

The feedback presents a mixed picture. A number of families report very positive experiences, particularly where transport is reliable, communication is good and drivers/Passenger Assistants are consistent, kind and familiar with the child. Individual staff and named contacts are praised for making the process significantly less stressful.

However, the negative feedback shows recurring systemic themes rather than isolated dissatisfaction. These include failures at the start of term, poor communication and responsiveness, repeated changes of driver/vehicle/Passenger Assistant, capacity and route-planning concerns, financial impact on families, and potentially serious safeguarding, training and medical-needs concerns.

2. Key themes emerging from the feedback

Communication and responsiveness

Parents report unanswered emails, full voicemail boxes, calls not being returned, schools also struggling to obtain responses, incorrect information being issued and promised call-backs not occurring. Several comments suggest that timely communication would substantially reduce anxiety even when an operational problem occurs.

Reliability and start-of-term failures

Reports include transport not arriving on the first day, incorrect collection times, buses driving past waiting children, and arrangements remaining unresolved into the second week of term.

Consistency and routine

Families describe frequent changes to drivers, vehicles and Passenger Assistants. This is particularly significant for children who rely on routine, predictability and familiar adults.

Capacity and route planning

Parents report lack of available places, insufficient buses, declined paid places and very long journeys. There are concerns that growth in pupil numbers and demand at particular schools has not been adequately anticipated.

Financial and practical impact

Families describe mileage uncertainty, substantial annual transport costs, loss of working time, use of annual leave and the need to arrange their own school transport while waiting for Council arrangements.

Safeguarding, conduct and quality

Some comments raise concerns about mobile phone use, earphones while driving, inappropriate comments, staff conduct, seating, vehicle equipment and whether staff are appropriately trained and vetted. These should be distinguished from general service complaints and assessed through appropriate safeguarding/quality assurance processes.

Emergency medication and medical needs

One parent raises a serious concern about the ability of transport staff to respond where a child may require emergency medication. This warrants clarification of policy, risk assessment, training, information sharing and contingency arrangements.

Post-16 transport

Feedback from a parent of a 19-year-old attending college describes an unsuccessful appeal, incorrect paperwork/information, an adjournment and a lack of subsequent communication, with no transport in place into the second week.

Administration and data quality

Examples include incorrect addresses, times, paperwork, ages and year groups. These suggest that some failures may originate within the application, assessment, allocation or information-transfer process rather than solely with providers.

3. Positive feedback – what appears to work

The positive comments are important because they identify elements of the service that families value and that could potentially be replicated more consistently.

- Reliable, punctual transport over an extended period.
- Kind, approachable and professional drivers and Passenger Assistants.
- A consistent driver/PA and familiar transport arrangement.
- Clear communication and families being kept informed.
- A named, knowledgeable contact who answers questions and makes the process easier.
- Children feeling comfortable and happy to travel.

4. What the feedback suggests about service quality

A recurring distinction is visible between the experience of the individual people delivering transport and the experience of the wider system. Where families have a stable route and good communication, experiences can be excellent. Where the system is inconsistent or difficult to contact, relatively small operational problems become significant sources of anxiety and disruption.

A useful question for the Transport Team is therefore: “What are families receiving when their experience is positive that families with negative experiences are not?” This could identify practical differences in provider performance, communication, route stability, named contacts, training or information sharing.

5. Specific issues requiring further investigation

- First-day and first-week transport failures.
- Repeated changes of driver, vehicle and Passenger Assistant.
- Unanswered parent and school enquiries.
- Reports of unsafe or inappropriate staff behaviour, including phone/earphone use.
- Suitability and condition of booster seats and other vehicle equipment.
- Processes for children requiring emergency medication during transport.
- Post-16 eligibility, appeal and transition arrangements.
- Capacity planning for growing schools and increasing demand.
- Very long daily journeys and the criteria used to determine route suitability.
- Outstanding mileage claims and clarity about payments.
- Accuracy and quality assurance of addresses, dates, ages, year groups and route information.

6. Questions for discussion with the Transport Team

1. What does North Northamptonshire Council define as a successful SEND transport service?
2. Is consistency of driver, vehicle and Passenger Assistant measured as a quality indicator, or is performance primarily measured by whether a journey occurred?
3. What contingency arrangements are in place when a planned vehicle or driver fails to attend?
4. What is the expected communication standard when transport is late, cancelled or changed?
5. How does the Council forecast SEND transport demand for growing schools and new developments?
6. How are individual SEND, behavioural, mobility and medical needs communicated to transport providers?
7. What is the process where a child requires emergency medication during a journey?
8. How is provider compliance with safeguarding, DBS, training and conduct requirements audited?
9. What quality assurance takes place on vehicles and equipment, including booster seats?
10. How are post-16 transport applications and appeals monitored to prevent young people being left without transport?
11. How are lessons from complaints and parent feedback fed back into commissioning and provider management?

7. Parent-carer feedback screenshots

The following screenshots are reproduced with commenter names, profile images and named individuals redacted to protect anonymity. The underlying wording and visual evidence are otherwise retained.

- NAME REDACTED

NAME REDACTED

Harris very helpful, he answered all of my many questions and made the process very stress free for me. Which is a nice change from the usual Sen processes. All of my correspondence with the office has been very positive, they are very polite. The taxi driver and escort have been great, very kind. My son enjoys chatting to them. The only feedback I would give is that on occasions they have been late and I wish they would give me a call to let me know as this would reduce anxiety.

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2
- NAME REDACTED

NAME REDACTED

Had no problems for over a year for my 5 year old, she's always happy to go into school and her taxi is always on time

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3
- NAME REDACTED

NAME REDACTED

We was told the wrong time for my son's bus, meaning a lot of children missed the bus on the first couple of days. Also it only waits for 5 minutes at collection time which isn't long enough, especially for new year 7s who have to get the phone pouches unlocked and find the way to the bus stop when they don't know their way around. Leaving my son panicked and not knowing what to do as he missed the bus home on his first day

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- NAME REDACTED

NAME REDACTED

Last year everything was fine we get mileage paid, kept in the loop when we moved increased mileage. This year I am still waiting for my claim details as to what they will pay and how many miles.

Screenshot 1 – anonymised

- NAME R

NAME REDACTED · d

1st day back today, Applied before deadline in may for permanent change of address, approved by NNC in July.
Had a text message from a taxi company confirming collection details, turns out this was an error (when I called them to find out what on earth was happening) then Had a different company turn up at the incorrect address. Called the Transport team, advised someone would call me back today... surprise no call back. Even when you think everything is all sorted, it still isn't.

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- NAME R

NAME REDACTED · 6d

Feb so far - same company as last year - lovely driver and PA
NAME REDACTED sadly retiring and was so kind and easy to talk to - always made the process easier he will be missed

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- NAME R

NAME REDACTED · d

Excellent! same transport for last 3 years who communicate so well and keep us well informed. Provider is called 24/7

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- NAME R

NAME REDACTED

Absolutely no problems from September 2025 to June 2026 until we relocated and no longer needed transport. Always turned up , only late a few times with a text ahead explaining , the only issue I found was trying to get hold of the Sen transport team it's literally impossible! But in general positive experience

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- NAME R

NAME REDACTED · 4d

Any suggestions on how to contact transport with regards to current sen transport issues, please? Tried ringing, voicemail box is full, emailed 4 times no reply, school have emailed and no reply either.....post 16 child with no active transport in place! 😞

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Screenshot 2 – anonymised

NAME REDACTED
NAME R I mean a reply to an email I sent on Friday would be a start 🙏

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NAME REDACTED 6d
NAME R Not good, still not organised. Applied in July when I phone asking how the transport worked after not hearing anything to be informed I should have applied in May but they forgot to email details to me (started the school end of Feb so all new). They explained a lot of parents in the same boat and they are assessed strictly in order of receipt, meaning I'm not the only parent they forgot to email. School is just under a 4 hour round trip each day and no help towards cost. At the moment using holiday leave broken down to cover time off work for drop off and collect with no idea when this will get sorted 😡

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R Not a great start for my Yr 7 daughter, on day 1 the bus didn't arrive and today it drove straight past the children at the bus stop. I will be contacting Stagecoach also.

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NAME REDACTED · 6d · 🖋 Author
NAME R **North Northamptonshire Parent Carer Voices**
NAME REDACTED his SEND transport? or public transport?

👍 🗨 Reply

 Reply to Anna Merrill 

NAME REDACTED · 6d
NAME R Still not confirmed by council.

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Screenshot 3 – anonymised

NAME REDACTED
NAME R Awful!

Every year we've had some sort of problem with communication, offering public buses that don't get them to school on time. Then this year you decided to not bother putting another bus on! I'm prepared to pay the yearly cost, but its still a no. They don't take phone calls, don't reply to emails.

You make us all apply in May so you know we'll in advance which kids need buses. CBA has loads of buses but not WVA.

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R Awful. I cannot believe how early they come. Because they try to put too many kids into a taxi bus rather than use 2 taxis. I asked if my son could at least eat his breakfast but in the taxi but told no. It's cost me a fortune too as I get no bursary.

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R Really awful experience!! The School my daughter attends is growing year on year as it is a new school. So this year she has no transport! This is because you have added no new buses despite the increase in children!

The school is out of town so loads of people qualify for free school bus. Despite being 5miles from the school my daughter doesn't qualify (because apparently she was offered another school that we declined) - I was not aware of the nightmare transport would be as we have not long moved to the area.

Also, despite the transport now costing parents an eye watering £1000 for the year, apparently not all the costs are covered.

I do not feel it is fair to not add extra busses...loads of parents in the same boat now. The school is out of town and until more houses are built and a better catchment is worked on with tue new homes, you should have realised this would be the issue and factored it in!

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Screenshot 4 – anonymised

NAME REDACTED
NAME R Still waiting the paper work was late through due to school with ehcp gutted for my daughter as her routine at the moment im taking her to school

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R For the 10th September running they've failed to show up on first day. Already on our second driver/car and she's only been back since Tuesday. It remains the usual 🤖 show.

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R Make that 3 drivers/cars since last Tuesday 🙄

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NAME REDACTED
NAME R Awful!!!

Applied super early and both children declined for a paid place. More stress and drama having to arrange to pick up and drop off. Disgusting response from NNC when I pleaded with them for support

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Screenshot 5 – anonymised

The staff are different everyday, you have drivers driving with earphones in, you have some on the phone constantly. All PA are different everyday, they ask you questions on where to sit them, different cars constantly. One with an fan or something in, which I said no to sit next to but didn't listen and I had to get on, as my child will 'play' with this and it's not safe. One PA even asked me for a drink of water today, one laughed when making comments that my son hits? It's legit a SEN transport didn't think you would have to explain this. Never on time, can't get fully 'ready' and then have to wait. Sometimes getting here 10am on wards. Not forecoming, polite or even kind.

Inconsistent

Different people, different cars,
the boosters are not even
comfortable or look like they fit
and need cleaning



Screenshot 7 – anonymised

NAM

Playful Firefly



NAME REDACTED

School transport. In 6 days back we've had 3 different drivers, 3 different cars, 2 PA'a. No transport on first day back as usual.

Transport team switched their phones off so no contact. I have to pay almost £1000 towards this transport and it's constantly



Screenshot 8 – anonymised

School Transport continues to discriminate against transport eligible children who require emergency medications by failing to even consider training staff to deliver life saving medications. Despite this being a recommendation in the DFE guidelines, the NNC continues to ignore the problem. Leaving families a devastating choice between allowing them to transport without life saving medication, not attending school or transporting themselves. Disappointing to hear School Transport crowing about how well they are doing when they are failing a whole cohort of children. In the current climate considering Benedicts Law there is a massive gap here that is an accident waiting to happen!

Screenshot 9 – anonymised

School transport

Why do you keep hanging providers, especially for children with SEND, they need routine not lots of strangers. The latest driver seems ok but the chaperone just glares, gives evil looks my child has confirmed he doesn't talk even when asked questions he is glued to his phone the whole journey, has he been DBS checked should he even be working in this job, I think not.

my son 19 -Downs syndrome,

He attends Stamford college from Corby going into his 2nd year. He was refused transport. He had it for his first year. Failed stage one appeal so teams meaning for stage two. It had to be adjourned they had the wrong paperwork, did not know it was his second year, were not aware he was 19. Lads in his class are on transport ??

It was adjourned **NAME REDACTED** fin to get back to me at end of play on the day 28/08/26 -his words we are now on week 2 with no communication whatsoever and surprisingly no transport

Screenshot 11 – anonymised

Conclusion

The feedback demonstrates that families can experience an excellent SEND transport service when the fundamentals are in place: reliability, consistency, appropriate staff, clear communication and understanding of individual needs. The concern is that these fundamentals do not appear to be consistently experienced across the service.

The evidence therefore supports a constructive but firm conversation with the Transport Team about whether current processes, performance measures and provider arrangements are sufficiently SEND-informed, and whether the Council is capturing the full impact of transport failures on children, young people and their families.