



## **SNAP PARENT CARER FORUM**

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

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# **Position Statement**

**Issues with arrangements of SEND Transport**

**September 2025**

**This report should be read in conjunction with the updated Position Statement which is published on our website [Position Statements - SNAP PCF - Central Bedfordshire](#)**

### **SNAP PCF Role**

SNAP PCF (Special Needs Action Panel, Parent Carer Forum) is an independent, parent-led organisation for families of children and young people (0–25) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Central Bedfordshire. Together, we share real-life experiences, raise awareness of the challenges families face, and work with education, health, and social care services to make things better for our children and young people.

### **Position Statements**

SNAP PCF will be publishing position statements as and when the need arises for our Forum to formally communicate our point of view on any issues that arise. These can be found on our [website](#).

### **Purpose of This Statement**

SNAP PCF is publishing this statement to highlight the continuing failures in the arrangements of SEND school and college transport in Central Bedfordshire. We set out:

- the issues raised by families,
- the risks these failures create for children, young people, and their education,
- the legal duties not being met, and
- our recommendations for urgent improvement.

## The Issue

SEND transport is a statutory duty. Yet, year after year, families report:

- poor communication,
- confusion over processes,
- safeguarding oversights, and
- a lack of joined up working between the SEND School Transport and EHCP Teams.

This causes unnecessary distress to children and young people (CYP), undermines educational placements, and ultimately increases costs to the Council.

## Main Themes

### Communication issues

Poor communication from the school transport team to parent carers despite parent carers repeatedly chasing for information about what is happening with their child or young person's school transport for weeks and even months via the school transport portal or telephone. Parents are left not knowing who will be providing transport for their child or young person to and from school right up until or even after their return to school or college due to providers being changed and routes being put out to tender without parents being informed.

Yet CBC School Transport policy states:

*'Notice will always be given to parents/guardians ahead of any proposed changes to provision'. (Section 8.1)*

We understand that the SEND Transport Team is under a lot of pressure over the summer to make the necessary arrangements, does the capacity of this team need expanding over this period?

### Recommissioning transport arrangements

Parent carers report a lack of support offered around transition from one transport provider to another, many children and young people have taken months, sometimes years, to build trusted relationships with the transport providers which for some are essential for the smooth transition from home to their education setting. The potential impact on the child or young person is on school attendance and a breakdown of the school placement.

### Safeguarding

Concerns have been raised by some parents around the lack of information that is being passed to transport providers regarding children and young people's needs or from a child or young person's EHCP. In one case important medical information regarding a child or young person was apparently not passed on to the transport provider, which in an emergency could have proved traumatic for both the child and young person involved and who they would be sharing the transport with. Also, there are reports of young

people being left without adequate supervision at the end of their college class whilst waiting for transport to arrive creating stress and dysregulation for the young person.

### **Children & Young People uncoupled from their year group**

Decisions are being made about children and young people's school transport without taking into consideration the information that is contained within their EHCP. Children uncoupled from their year group have had their transport terminated when they have reached a certain age, e.g. 12 for middle school, even though they are actually in the academic year below their chronological age and have been for several years.

In addition, other children and young people with significant trauma from past school experiences are being told their transport provider will be changed without consulting with the parent carers and considering the emotional wellbeing of the child or young person involved. This is an ongoing issue which needs resolving with closer working between the transport team and the EHCP Team, we have been asking for this to happen over several years.

### **Risk Assessments**

Concerns have been raised around safeguarding and lack of risk assessments taking place for changes to school transport from taxis to 'fleet' services to special schools. Some children and young people have gone from sharing a taxi with one other plus a chaperone and driver to being placed in a bus with 9 or 10 other students with varying medical and physical needs, with no apparent regard being taken for how the children and young people involved will cope with this change in their school routine.

Another concerned carer told us their child was removed from a single use taxi and put on a fleet vehicle creating a 2 hour and 35-minute journey to school less than 10 miles away, a return journey of over five hours, after much complaining this was rectified but not after creating unnecessary stress and upset to the family.

### **College Arrangements**

Concerns have also been raised about the transport policy for young people attending college. Parent carers have been told students with SEND attending college will be provided transport at the start and end of the college day, regardless of lesson times. However, many young people's timetables don't reflect this, and they are having to wait at college until they are collected by their school transport at the end of the day. This has caused unnecessary anxiety for some young people, and parent carers are concerned that this will in turn impact their young person's ability to attend college especially if they have had a history of Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance.

The School Transport webpage mentions completing a 'Bespoke Request Form' if required and adding it to the young person's application. This isn't clear to parent carers that this is something they need to do if their young person has mental health or medical needs and will not cope with waiting on campus once their lessons have finished for their transport to collect them. We feel this needs clarifying, especially as the 16-19 Transport Policy says that

*'The type of assistance provided will be based on the assessment of individual needs'* (Section 7.2).

Also concerning is after parent carers have completed this form, it has gone missing and as a result not been actioned by the School Transport team, causing further stress for the parent carer. In a few cases we can see the School Transport team denying having received the forms until parent carers have evidenced this to be wrong. We have also seen where the form has been completed incorrectly rather than going back to the parents for clarity transport arrangements have not been progressed.

### **Lack of joined up working**

Parents are aware that when it comes to EHCP provision, the Council places significant emphasis on whether support is *"incompatible with the efficient use of resources."* We also know that CBC frequently highlights the cost of SEND to the Council. The High Needs Block exists to fund the additional support children and young people require meeting their outcomes in their Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). For some families, social care support is also in place. In principle, these resources should ensure that the child or young person can access and sustain their education placements.

However, when it comes to transport, the approach is purely transactional and fails to consider the wider impact. This creates a real risk of education placements breaking down, leading not only to distress for families but also higher long-term costs for the Council.

Take, for example, the transition of young people from Ivel Valley Special School to North Herts College. We have already highlighted issues with lost forms and unclear communication about their processes. The greater concern is the direct impact on young people themselves. CBC appears not to recognise how critical these transitions are, particularly for the most vulnerable. Students have been left distressed, watching peers leave at the end of the day while they wait hours for transport. This unnecessary stress, particularly during the first days of a new placement, can be enough to derail their college experience entirely.

If a placement breaks down because transport has not been properly arranged, the consequences are severe:

- The young person loses access to education, with long-term effects on their life chances.
- Parents are often forced into the tribunal process, which can take over a year—by which point reintegration is far less likely.
- The cost burden then shifts to adult social care, which is significantly higher than ensuring the original placement succeeds.

This is a false economy. By failing to provide reliable and well-managed SEND transport, CBC not only causes unnecessary distress to young people and families but also risks higher costs to the public purse. Everyone loses, most of all the children and young people the system is supposed to support.

## Complaints process

Parent carers are having to submit an official complaint to CBC to get a satisfactory outcome for their child or young person or copy in local councillors/senior members of the leadership team and SNAP PCF. This shouldn't need to happen to receive the School Transport they are legally entitled to that Contact tells us enables a child

*“To reach school without undue stress, strain or difficulty such as would prevent him from benefiting from the education the school has to offer, [...] [and] to travel in safety and in reasonable comfort”.*

If processes were clear and transparent for parent carers and were being followed by the School Transport Team so that each child or young person needs around school transport are considered on a case-by-case basis, then many of these complaints and the stress endured by parent carers could be avoided.

## Some quotes from Parent Carers:

*‘The way CBC has dealt with this is totally wrong on so many levels I don't know where to begin.’ The same parent also said CBC showed a **‘total lack of empathy and understanding’** to the situation.*

*CBC have been **‘wholly inappropriate and dismissive of the importance of X’s education and wellbeing’***

*CBC’s response **‘strongly suggests that financial priorities have been placed above the wellbeing and safety of our children, which is entirely unacceptable’***

*CBC’s failures have **‘placed a heavy and avoidable burden’** on the child or young person’s family*

*CBC’s actions have caused **‘significant distress’** to their child or young person.*

*CBC’s treatment of parent carers and child or young person with SEND as **‘shameful’** and **‘very upsetting’***

***‘It’s the same every year, just before school starts, they’ve had long enough to get it sorted. Absolutely ridiculous, and definitely not abiding to duty of care’.***

***2 days per week he finishes college at 12:15am and one day he does not start until 13:15pm** The taxi company came back to me and said **CBC have only instructed them to do 09:00am pickup and 16:20pm pickups** and that I would need to contact CBC to get them to authorise the earlier pickups and later starts. **Surely, they are not expecting him to spend 11 hours per week waiting on transport. The total hours of his course is only 15.5hrs.***

## SNAP PCF – How we are trying to support our membership:

We know from the feedback we have received from parent carers this year that poor communication, lack of clarity, care and co-production are key to many of the School Transport Issues we are seeing.

Following the Test the Temperature Workshop with Central Bedfordshire Council, the BMLK ICB and our local Health providers SNAP PCF have asked that the following 6C's be adopted as a new way of working together.

### [6 C's Improving SEND Services Through Shared Values & Culture Change - SNAP PCF - Central Bedfordshire](#)

We ask that the School Transport Team join SNAP PCF and other Services across the Central Bedfordshire Council, the BLMK ICB and local health partners in co-producing a commitment statement to the 6C's. We would also recommend that the SEND Transport Team align with our [Partnership Agreement](#) with CBC

In previous years we have raised concerns about transport at the beginning of each academic year.

We are mindful that in 2021 following complaints for SNAP PCF there was a commitment to work with us, and CBC published an apology (see below).



Central Bedfordshire Council

September 8, 2021 · 🌐

We apologise for the delay in answering your calls

We have held a meeting with SNAP Parent Carer Forum, and we want to say that we are incredibly sorry to all parents and carers who did not receive information regarding their child's school transport arrangements before the start of the academic year. It is clear that we need to change and improve the way that we are communicating with parents and carers regarding school transport arrangements, and we are committed to working in partnership with SNAP PCF to undertake a lessons learnt activity. We will be reviewing all of our processes together with SNAP PCF, to ensure that we improve this experience for all of our families moving forward.

We are working to respond to all enquiries as quickly as possible, but due to the very high volume of calls and emails, there is a long waiting time for all incoming phone calls. To reduce this as much as possible, we are working to secure additional staff members to support the team. We do apologise if you experience a long waiting time and we are doing our utmost to reduce this.

**School Transport  
Update**



It should be noted that for one year in September 2022 following our complaints to CBC in 2021 there was a commitment to work more closely with us. We were able to find parents who still didn't have transport at the start of August enabling the Transport team

to make arrangements ready for September, we were able to contact a manager and bypass the ticketing system by mid-August if transport still had not been provided. Parents commented that communication had improved. We understand that Ivel Valley Special School who previously advised the Transport Team of the cohort of children and young people and how best to transport them have also been excluded from being involved despite many requests to do so. Somewhere it would appear a decision has been made to remove SNAP PCF from our strategic role and Special Schools from their operational role.

### **SNAP PCF Recommendations:**

- **Closer working between the Transport and EHCP Teams.**  
We recommend that the School Transport Team establish a formal working relationship with the EHCP Team. Decisions around transport should be guided by the child or young person's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which is a legal document. This would ensure that transport arrangements reflect the specific needs of the child or young person rather than being decided in isolation or based solely on cost and efficiency.
- **Commitment to the 6C's and co-production**  
We ask that the School Transport Team support SNAP PCF's 6 C's *framework* Communication, Co-production, Care, Consistency, Clarity, and Commitment by co-producing a commitment statement with us. A shared commitment would help rebuild trust with families.
- **Sign-up to the SNAP PCF Partnership Agreement**  
We request that the Directorate of Public Protection and Transport sign up to our Partnership Agreement, which sets out how SNAP PCF and CBC work together in a co-productive way. This would ensure the parent carer voice is not only heard but actively included in shaping transport services.
- **Improved communication and transparency**  
CBC must improve how it communicates with parent carers about transport arrangements. Clear processes, consistent updates, and transparency around decision-making would prevent the unnecessary stress currently endured by families, particularly at the start of the academic year when children and young people are already managing a challenging transition back to education.
- **Earlier planning of tendering processes**  
Where Procurement Law requires school transport routes to be put out to tender, this should be done well in advance. We recommend that the process be completed at least 12 weeks before the new academic year. This would give families sufficient notice of any changes and allow children and young people many of whom struggle with transitions the time they need to prepare.
- **Co-produced transition process for SEND transport changes**  
We recommend the co-production of a clear transition process for SEND

transport, to be followed whenever there are changes to a child or young person's taxi provider, route, or chaperone to support emotional wellbeing and minimise disruption.

- **Respect for established transport relationships**  
Where a child or young person has developed a longstanding and trusted relationship with a particular transport provider or escort, this should be acknowledged as part of the decision-making process. Case law supports the principle that continuity of provision can be essential for a child's wellbeing. This requires EHCP needs to be fully considered when routes are put out to tender.
- **Review of college transport policy and Bespoke Request Form**  
We recommend revising the current transport policy for post-16 SEND young people, where provision is often limited to start-of-day and end-of-day journeys only. This does not reflect the needs of students with varied timetables who may be anxious, vulnerable, or exhausted by waiting long hours between lessons. CBC should make it clearer on the School Transport website and in SEND e-news bulletins when and why a Bespoke Request Form should be completed, ensuring parent carers can access the right support without unnecessary confusion or delay.
- **Ending unfair termination of transport for children uncoupled from their year group**  
Transport must not be automatically withdrawn when a child reaches a certain age if they remain in a lower year group for educational or developmental reasons. This information is contained in their EHCP and should guide decision making. CBC must provide assurance that EHCPs will always be read and properly applied in transport decisions.

### **CBC Transport Policy.**

CBC School Transport Policy for those of compulsory school age states that they will 'Provide equitable, safe, efficient and cost-effective transport assistance for pupils entitled to transport assistance in accordance with the Council's duties and powers as provided for in legislation;' (Section 3.1.1

### **What the law says**

The Contact website states that:

***'The local authority has a duty to provide suitable transport that is "non-stressful". The courts have defined this as transport that enables a child "to reach school without undue stress, strain or difficulty such as would prevent him from benefiting from the education the school has to offer, [...] [and] to travel in safety and in reasonable comfort'.***

***Local authorities should assess suitability of transport on an individual basis. Some factors that may be taken into account are medical needs, health and safety, and behaviour. A bus pass and a programme of travel training may, for example, be***

***appropriate for a young adult with moderate learning difficulties. But it might be highly unsuitable for an 11-year-old with severe autism and sensory sensitivities, who may need door-to-door transport with an escort. Children with physical disabilities may need specialist seating or a wheelchair-accessible vehicle.***

***Statutory guidance recommends maximum journey times of 45 minutes for primary-aged children and 75 minutes for secondary.'***

And on SEND Transport staff training it states:

***'Some parents report that staff on school transport are caring and a full part of their child's education team. In other cases, drivers and escorts may be unaware of children's difficulties and poorly trained to handle their behaviour.***

***Guidance is clear that all staff should have up-to-date training, including on:***

- ***Safeguarding.***
- ***Handling emergency situations, including medical emergencies.***
- ***Supporting and communicating with children with disabilities.***
- ***Meeting the specific needs of the children travelling.***

***Guidance also suggests that parents and schools may be best placed to advise on the needs of particular children.***

***Local authorities must also ensure that the necessary safeguarding checks are carried out.'***

Case Law - [R v Hereford and Worcester County Council, ex parte P 2 \[1992\] 2 FCR 732 | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#)

## **Conclusion**

Central Bedfordshire Council's continued failures around SEND transport create significant stress for families and sometimes can undermine educational placements. These failures are impacting on already stressed families and are also financially short-sighted: the costs of broken placements and increased need for adult social care far outweigh the cost of getting transport right the first time.

SNAP PCF calls on CBC to act urgently, work with us, and put children and young people's needs at the heart of their school and college transport arrangements.

## **Information for parent carers of where to find support:**

SENTAS (Special Educational Needs Transport Advocacy Service): [SENTAS – Special Educational Needs Transport Advocacy Service](#)

Contact [Transport in England | Contact](#)

IPSEA [Transport to school or college for children and young people with SEND](#)

Case Law - [R v Hereford and Worcester County Council, ex parte P 2 \[1992\] 2 FCR 732 | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#)

Local Offer [Travel and Transport | Central Bedfordshire SEND Local Offer](#)

[Central Bedfordshire Council's website](#) - details and how to apply for SEND Transport

CBC Policies for School Transport:

[Policy for Travel Assistance for Children and Young People Attending School](#)

[Policy for Travel Assistance for Young People Aged 16 to 19](#)

[Travel Assistance Policy for 19 to 25 year olds with SEND and/or an EHC plan](#)

**Please stay connected with us by emailing us updates on your lived experience, completing our surveys and attending our events.**

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