

Pinpoint Transport Session 21/3/24

We were joined by Sue and Emily from the County Council School Transport Team. The parents on the call shared their experiences, some good and some poor, so the Team could better understand the service's day-to-day experience. Sue and Emily explained the retendering process and the rules around spending public money, which explained why keeping the same taxi companies is not always possible.

We had a long conversation about PAs and what we should expect regarding their ability to speak English (this is a requirement), the expectation that they sit in the back of the vehicle with the child (unless it's agreed otherwise) and that they engage with the child, support their behaviour and communicate with the child. It was clear that these expectations are not consistently met, and the Team encouraged individual parent carers to contact them directly with any concerns.

All drivers have to be licensed and provide their documentation on request. All PAs have DBS clearance and should be carrying their personal ID (purple card) – should ypu have a new PA, you should feel free to ask to see it. If it's not provided, please alert the School Transport Team. The monitoring team carry out spot checks, but with over a thousand journeys each day, they are pleased to be contacted with queries and worries.

Issues were raised about how well children were supported when travelling –there were inconsistencies reported. Parent carers are encouraged to complete travel passports to help drivers and PAs better understand the needs of their children. If parent carers have feedback about these, the next letter will now provide a way to let the Team know what ypu like/dislike and what might make it more helpful for ypu and your child.

Space in the vehicles was raised as a concern – insufficient space for the PA to sit between children and children travelling together who might have been better off travelling alone or with more personal space. The Team can commission bigger vehicles where appropriate. Again, let them know the issues ypu are experiencing.

Parents and carers can access the Personal Transport Budget Scheme. It's more flexible than many realise and may, for some, provide greater flexibility in how and when you transport your child. There are more details on Pinpoint’s Home/School Transport Page.

We discuss the training for PAs and specifically the issues around managing challenging behaviours. Pinpoint offered to welcome PAs to join some of our sessions and to work to offer parent-carer tips to those providing the service. Given parent carers are highly skilled and PAs are hard to recruit, Pinpoint offered to promote part-time PA opportunities to parent carers as and when they arise.

Work is underway to introduce a new software system that will enable parent cars to track the taxi. This was welcomed.

We were fortunate to be joined by parent carers who were not yet using the service but were worried about the negative comments they had seen on social media. We reflected that those on the call had mixed experiences and that not everyone thought their service was poor. We also reflected that sharing on social media can be therapeutic, but unless the Team know about specific issues, they cannot address them.

We were grateful for one of the attendees' offers to visit a special school, Tii Hub, to speak to other parent carers.