

**PaCC Position Statement:
Home to School Transport –**



Emergency Statement 3rd September

2019

This emergency position statement is written in response to live feedback received from the community regarding changes to some home to school transport arrangements and the recent quality of communication to parent carers. PaCC welcomes a response from the Local Authority and is sharing this statement with families for their information.

PaCC acknowledge that there is a rationale and legal requirement for the re-tender process for the Home to School Transport service. However, PaCC have raised annually for many years that home to school transport provision must be safe and fit for purpose for our most vulnerable cohort of children and young people.

PaCC have repeatedly stressed that adequate time must be allocated to all home to school transport planning arrangements and that BHCC staff team must have sufficient capacity to undertake the task, including training in talking to parent carers. In previous position statements PaCC have challenged budget decisions and been firm that safety must never be compromised.

More recently, to support the transition process towards new transport providers, PaCC worked closely with the Local Authority and external consultants Edge Solutions to think through all concerns typically raised by parent carers, with the intention of ironing out the majority of issues that families might otherwise face at the start of September's return to school. We are disappointed therefore that recent parent carers' feedback indicates:

- Poor or no communication from transport providers and the Council to some parent carers regarding specific transport arrangements.
- Potential risks to a number of children and young people due to some ill thought out planning of journeys and passengers between transport providers and the Council, eg ill-suited vehicles and lack of opportunity to train vehicle passenger assistants.
- Facts about children and young people on the pupil information sheets not being utilised effectively, leading to safety concerns.
- Failure to process some transport applications in a timely manner.

PaCC also raise continuing concerns about the application of the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

PaCC hope that some issues may be satisfactorily resolved prior to the start of term but we continue to stress overleaf the principles that both the LA and the PaCC agreed and must be adhered to if /when co-designing the new contracts:

Brighton and Hove City Council stated the following via communication to parent carers (*abbreviated from BHCC comms, July 2019*)

BHCC needs to drive efficiency and quality improvements across all areas:

- Broadening the supplier base whilst maintaining quality and safeguarding
- Have the ability to respond effectively to the changes in demand
- Through updating the way, we work internally and with our suppliers, we expect to achieve better cost and quality outcomes in the future: More staff and a focus on transport will provide better control (routes) and scrutiny (spot checks).

Drivers and Vehicle Passenger Assistants training

Beyond induction training, it is expected that Drivers and VPAs have received training to better understand the requirements of people with special needs every two years. This training should include (but is not restricted to):

- First aid, including basic life support
- The handling of emergency situations, including when to contact the emergency services
- An awareness of different types of disability, including hidden disabilities
- An awareness of what constitutes discrimination
- Training in recognising, supporting and managing children with different types of disabilities, including hidden disabilities, and behaviour that may be associated with such disabilities
- Communicating appropriately with pupils with different types of disabilities, including hidden disabilities
- Operators must offer parents/carers the opportunity for the Driver and VPA to meet with the parents/carers and their child before the service starts. The Operator should consider the impact of establishment holidays and allow sufficient time to contact parent carers.

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PaCC recommends that parent carers continue to feedback all issues, positive and negative, to the Home to School transport team number **01273 293501**, and to PaCC by emailing admin@paccbrighton.org.uk and/or the PaCC FB page www.facebook.com/groups/parentcarerscouncil

The Amaze SENDIASS team will support any families through appeals and specific home to school transport legal advice. Contact details call **01273 772289** or email sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk.

The Parent Carers' Council (PaCC) is a parent-led forum which represents parent carers with children and young people with any kind of physical disability, learning disability, complex or long-term medical/health condition, SEMH (Social, Emotional, Mental Health) issues or special educational need. The group was formed to enable parent carers to work closely together to help improve services and support. It aims to help parents get more directly involved in the strategic delivery of services for disabled children in Brighton & Hove and now has over 380 signed up members. This position statement was developed through discussions with our Steering Group members and our nine partner groups: Barnado's Link Plus, Brighton Pebbles, Extratime, Autism Support and Awareness Promotion (ASAP), mASCot, T21, Sweet Peas, Amaze Face 2 Face and Children's Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG).