



Home to School Transport Survey

November 2022

Why did we do a survey on
home to school transport?

At **Family Voice** our core purpose is ensuring the lived experience of families, children & young people with additional needs is known to those making decisions which impact their daily lives.

In our Family Voice groups, sessions and social media presence we gather stories & experiences from families. Hearing lived experience is invaluable but, as Surrey's Parent Carer forum we aim to do three things:

1. Evidence the nature and scale of the any given issue.
2. Evidence the impact of the issues on families.
3. Make key recommendations for change to improve the lives of families.

Since late summer, the stand out topic was Home to School Transport.

In October we raised an Action Card with Surrey County Council.

Simultaneously we started our quarterly Quantitative Surveys. Naturally, given the scale of feedback we were receiving on Home to School Transport, we chose this for our first topic.

Our survey comprised of 9 questions and was open from October to the 25th November. **We received 290 responses.**

The following report is based on your input and feedback you have given us

We would like to thank all the families who completed the survey.

Background Information:

Survey Monkey link
shared with parent
carers

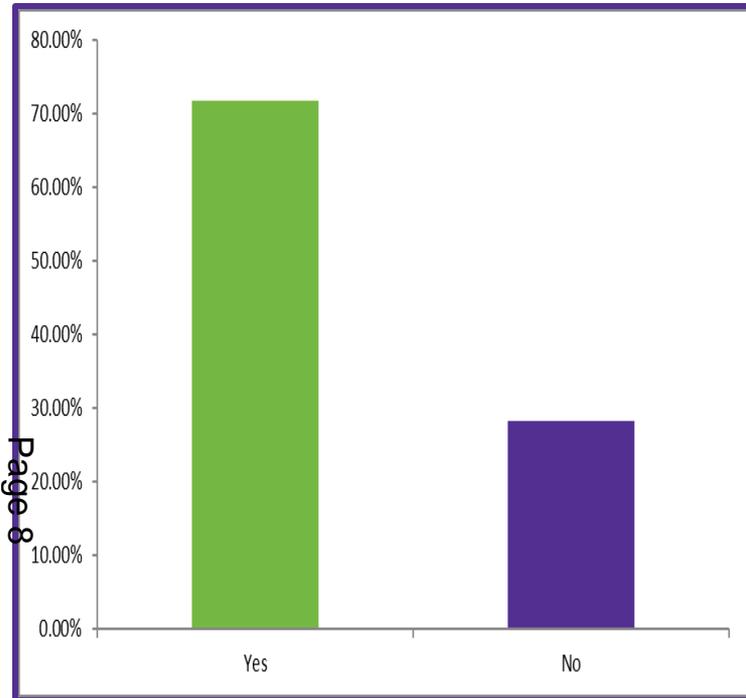
290 Responses

Survey undertaken
October 2022 -
November 2022

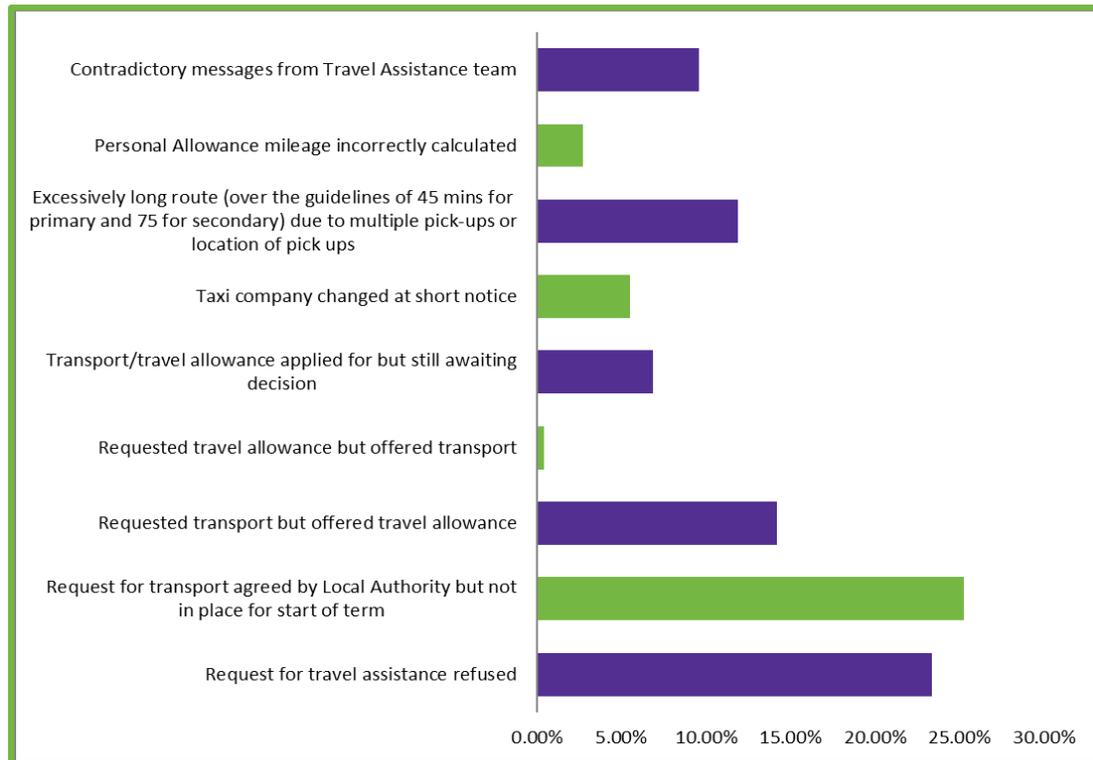
Summary of findings

- Of the **290** responses **71.72%** had experienced challenges with home to school transport this term.
- **25.23%** responded saying that although transport had been agreed, the arrangements had not been put in place for the start of term.
- Adverse impacts on the mental health, anxiety and wellbeing of **86.82%** of families affected by these transport issues
- **39.55%** reported financial difficulties due to the transport issues.
- There were huge variations reported around late applications with multiple responders stating they had received a letter with a May deadline not March.
- **19.54%** of children and young people were unable to attend school/college on the first day of term and of those **37.21%** were still unable to attend at the time of completing the survey.

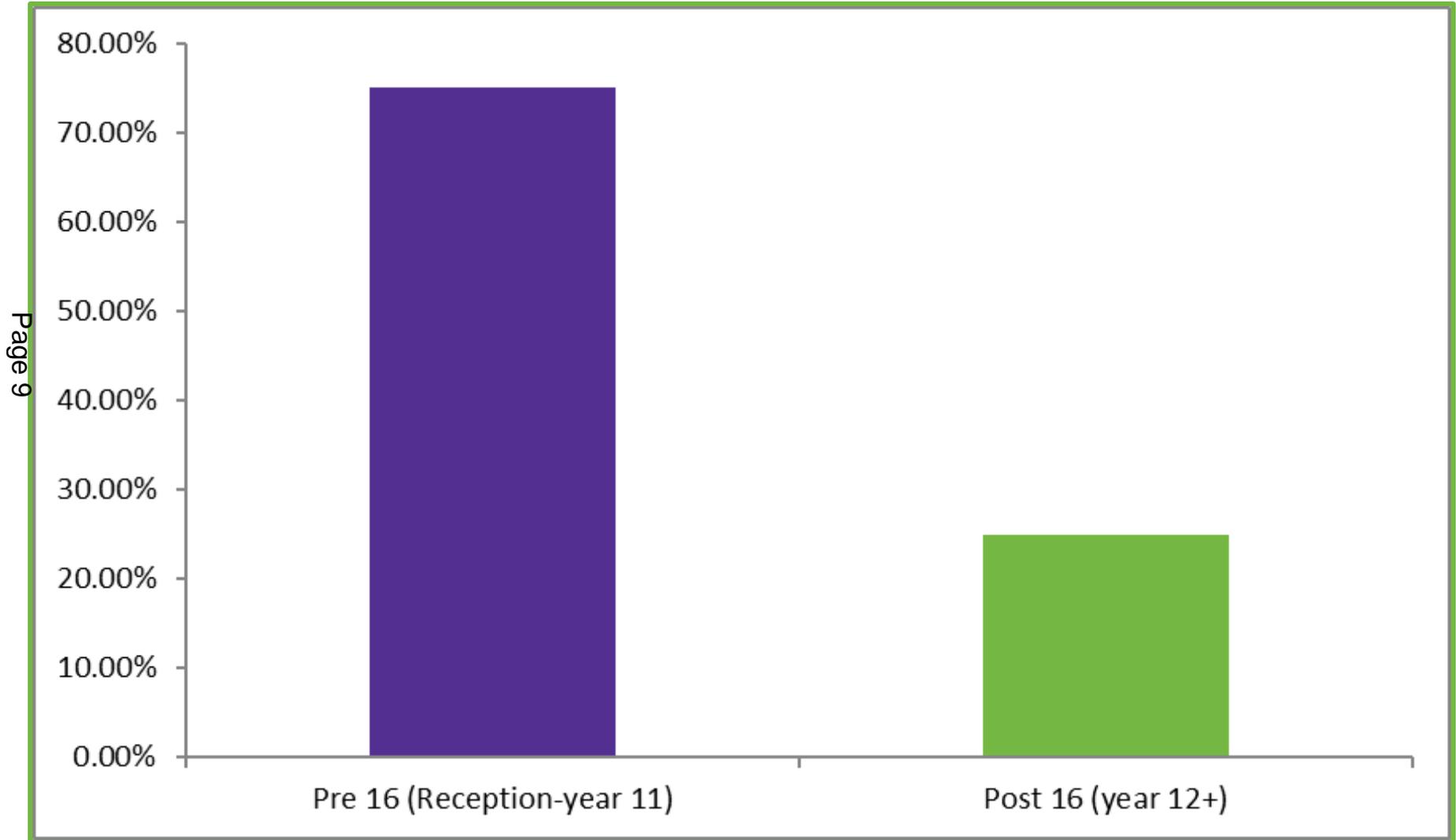
Have you had any difficulties with your Child/young person's home to school travel arrangements?



If there have been difficulties what were these?



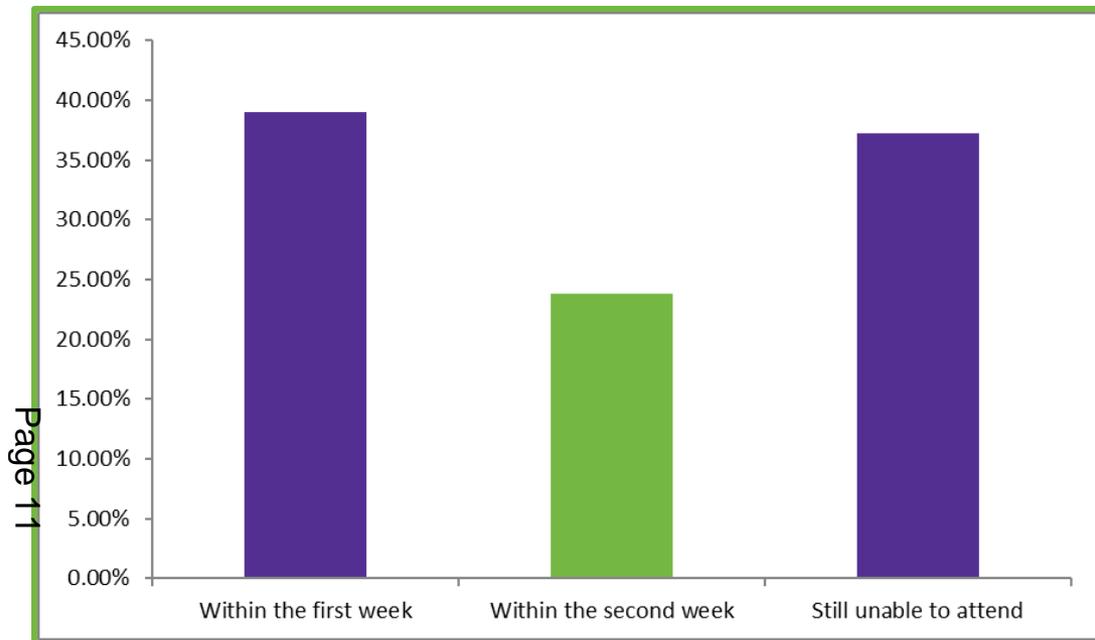
Was your application for pre or post 16?



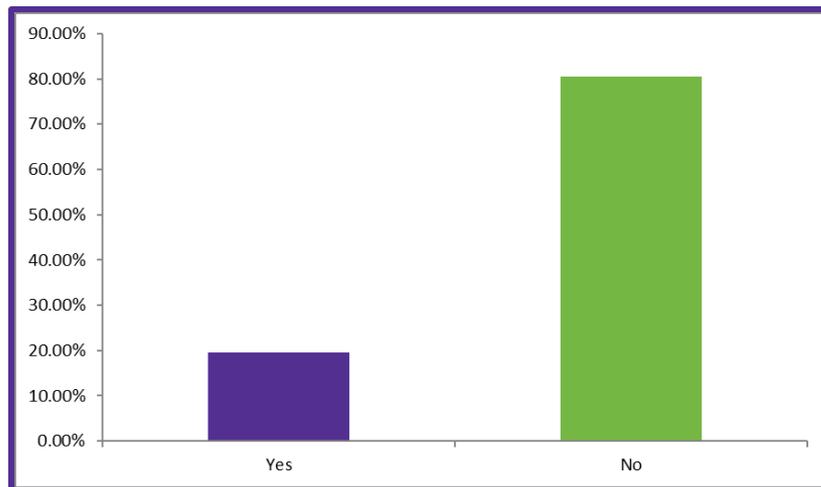
Post 16...

- Many of our calls that we received around transport were in relation to post 16 transport.
- The change in policy meant that many young people were suddenly not considered eligible or were offered a bursary instead of transport.
- At Family Voice Surrey we were disappointed that a gradual roll out of the new policy particularly for post 16 was not considered, to allow the families and young person the opportunity to explore options of services such as the independent travel training. Additionally for those in an active college course who had already had transport in place for the first year we were surprised to learn that the transport arrangements were not being honoured for the duration of the course.
- ATLAS which is a group of young people with additional needs have raised an action card asking for more public transport routes to enable them to access their specialist provision independently.

How quickly was this resolved to enable your child to get to their education setting?



Has the transport issue prevented your child/young person from attending their education setting on the first day of term?



Late Applications

Family Voice Surrey were told that the main reasons for the transport challenges were due to:

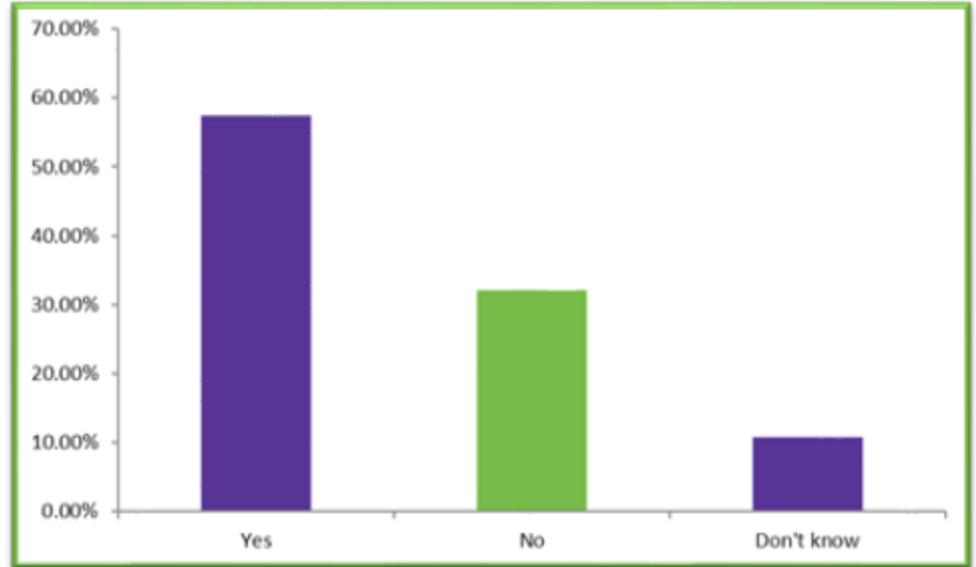
- late applications
- lack of drivers.

Families making formal complaints were given a different message - that the issues were due to:

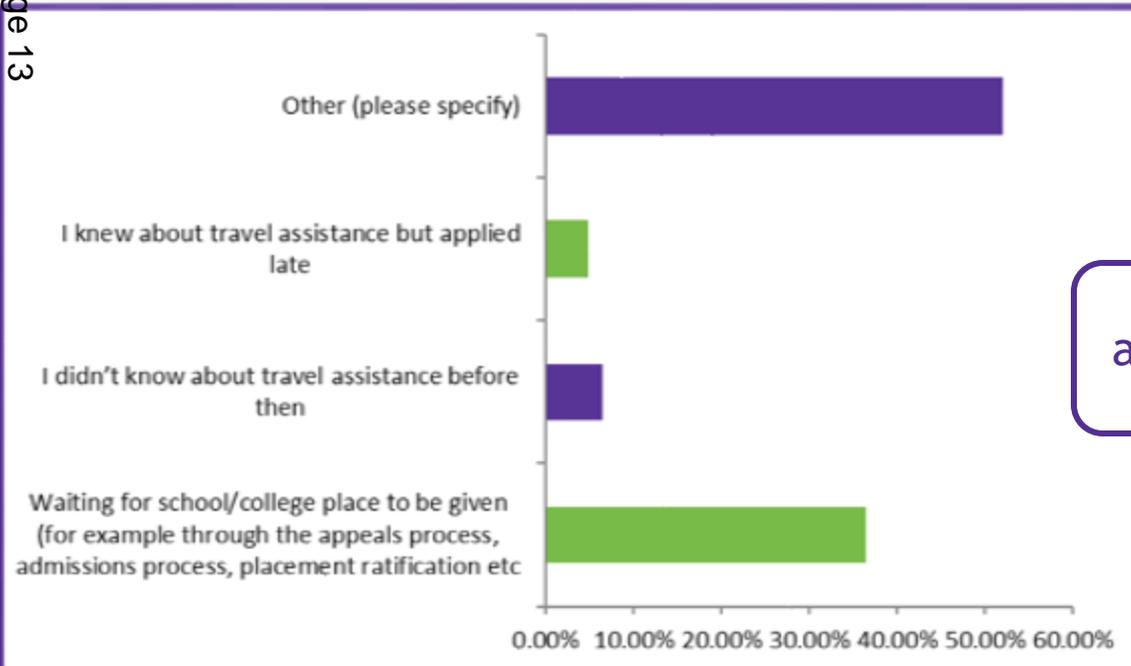
- The review of transport for over 9,000 pupils to almost 700 different settings.

This was said to have been a huge logistical task to be undertaken over the summer period.

Did you get your application in before 31st March 2022?



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If your application went in after 31st March 2022 what was the reason?

These were the main reasons stated in the 'other' section for applying after the deadline:



NOT INFORMED OF THE DEADLINE TO APPLY



NOT AWARE OF THE NEED TO REAPPLY FOR KEY STAGE TRANSFER



RECEIVED A LETTER SAYING THE DEADLINE WAS MAY NOT MARCH



WAITING FOR A FINALISED EHCP



WAITING FOR A SCHOOL PLACE



CHANGED SCHOOL



MOVED HOUSE



LACK OF COMMUNICATION FROM CASE WORKER

IMPACT

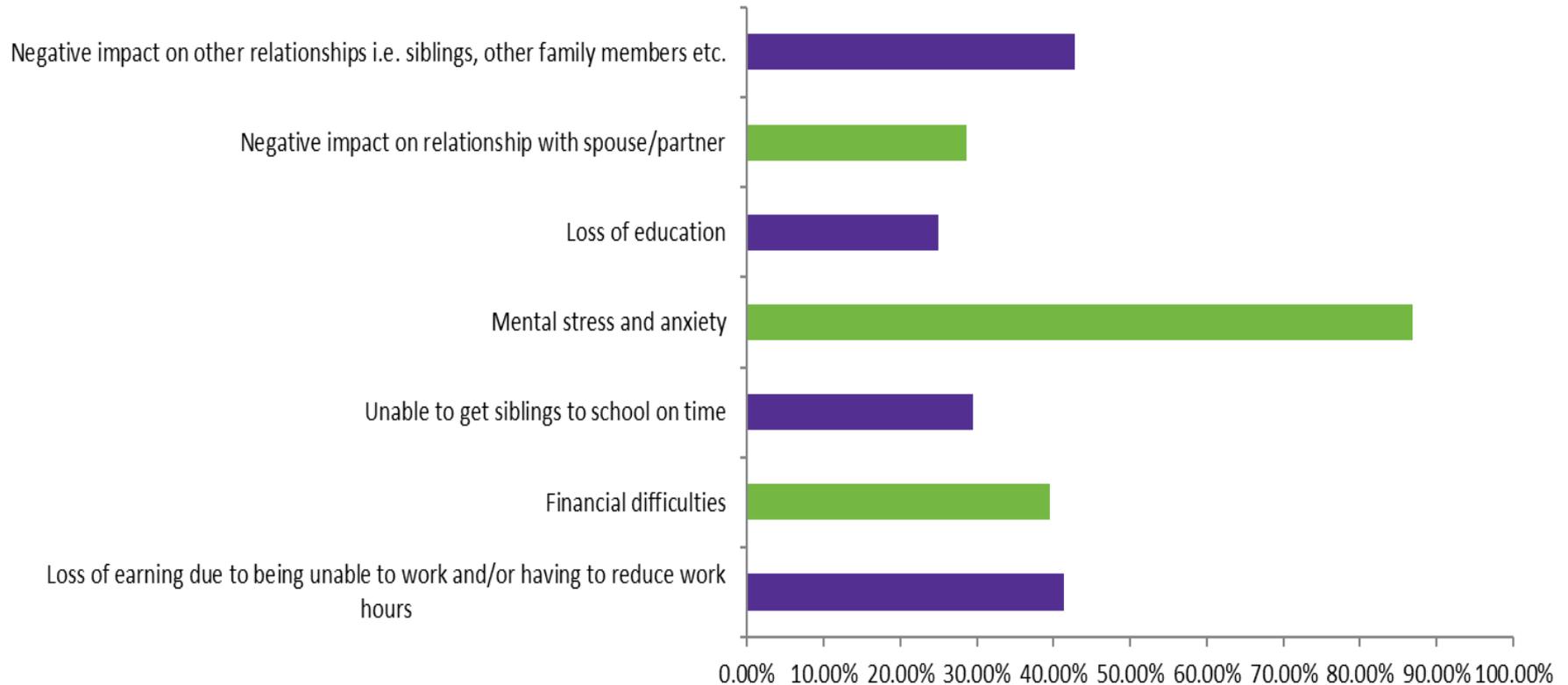
One of the key areas the survey highlighted was the impact that these transport issues had, on not only the child or young person but, their parent carers and the family as a whole.

This has had a huge impact on families:

- **Finances**
- **Mental health**
- **Relationships**
- **Loss of education**
- **Unable to work**

Families told us that they were having to use food banks due to the cost of driving their children to and back from school as there were delays on transport payments and they were struggling to pay for the fuel.

What impact have these travel assistance challenges had on your family?



Quotes from parent carers...

I was called 1 week before the start of term and told that we would not be getting transport and a bursary would be given to us instead. They said it was because I applied late - I only applied late because we didn't have a school named in the plan. I am distraught that my child will not be able to attend his first day at his new school. His anxiety is through the roof.

The deadline on the letter that I received about applying was the 16th May not the 31st March!

I have just had a call to say that under the new policy they are no longer offering solo transport and as there are no other children nearby to travel in a taxi with my daughter, they will offer us a bursary instead of 2 journeys a day. They said I can appeal if I disagree - it is 1 week before school goes back - I can't take her because her school is a 50 minute drive away and I have to get her siblings to school at the same time. My daughter is autistic and doesn't cope at all well with change, I honestly don't know what to do!

My child is unable to attend school until transport is organised. I do not drive as I have a neurological condition and Surrey expect me to transport them to and from school but will only pay for 2 journeys a day! I am a single parent and simply cannot afford to pay for him to get to school on that small amount. This means I cannot work so will lose my earnings as well. How is this allowed to happen I just don't know what to do!

I found out from a statement posted online that transport arrangements might not be in place for the start of term. I then heard nothing about whether our transport would be in place, so my son has been unable to go to school. We have not been able to reach anyone on any of the phone numbers provided and we are now 3 days into the new school year.

I had no idea that I had to reapply! Why did they not tell us this when we received the updated plan?

I applied for transport on time but I heard nothing about the transport arrangements. My child is now so anxious as they don't know who is taking them to school that they won't leave their bedroom. I phoned Surrey this morning at 9.10 am and am currently still on hold, it's now 10.45 am...

Key Findings...

19.54% of children or young people were unable to attend their first day of school/college because they didn't have transport in place.

37.21% of those who were unable to attend on the first day of term due to transport were still unable to attend at the time of completing the survey.

25.23% had transport agreed but not in place for the start of term.

86.82% of respondents reported that they had experience negative mental health & anxiety due to the transport challenges.

41.36% of respondents reported financial difficulties

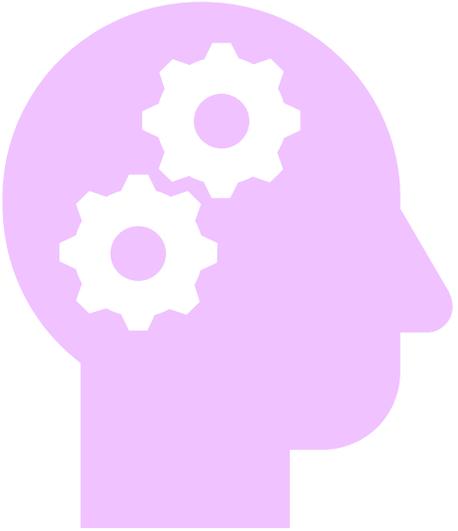
Reports of not being informed of the need to reapply for Key Stage Transfer.

Reports of receiving the incorrect deadline date which resulted in a 'late' application.

Many families applied past the deadline due to not having a finalised EHCP or named school.

14.22% requested transport but were told they would have travel allowance instead.

Learnings



Lessons Learned...

Poor communication and a distinct lack of joined up working has been a key factor in the challenges that have occurred.

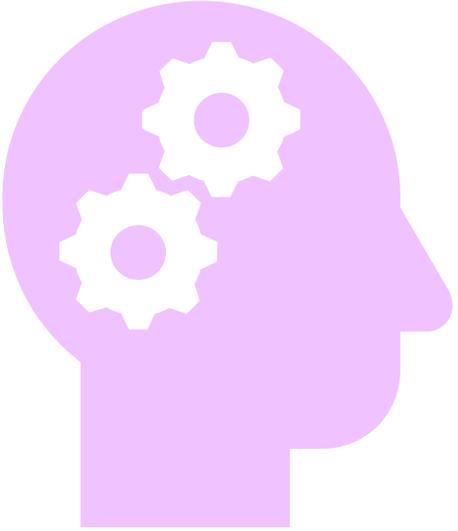
The language used when communicating with families has at times added to the stress and shown a lack of understanding of the lived parent carer experience - saying that an application is late when a school hasn't been named for example is not appropriate.

Families should not be suffering financially in order to get their child to school, this has happened to too many families and urgent action needs to be taken to ensure this isn't repeated.

The damage this has done in breaking the trust between the local authority and families is huge, and acknowledgement of this breakdown along with action to show the commitment to begin to repair this trust is imperative.

Resource has been severely lacking which has led to the service becoming overwhelmed - knowing in advance the busy periods and ensuring the service is resourced appropriately to meet demand should be a key lesson to be taken from this.

This is entitled lessons learned - but how are the local authority going to learn from this and ensure the same mistakes are not repeated again?



Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

To have clarity on the policy on Independent Travel Allowance (ITA) and assurance that the process is in line with statutory guidance - specifically:

- That unless a parent agrees to transport their child, the LA has to provide appropriate transport.
- Assurance that a parent who cannot accept an ITA in lieu of transport will not be asked to appeal the decision.

Recommendation 2:

For ALL families who accept an ITA to be paid for the 4 trips they make a day to transport their child or young person (CYP) to their setting NOT just when the CYP is in the vehicle. This ensures that they are not at a financial disadvantage to those who are transported in a LA funded vehicle.

Families who have been in receipt of an ITA since September have their allowance recalculated to reflect 4 journeys a day instead of 2 and are reimbursed the deficit based on the current calculation.

Recommendation 3:

To have clarity on the new arrangements for post 16 transport and an understanding of how extenuating circumstances are taken into consideration.

Recommendation 4:

To have preparation for adulthood in mind for all young people and ensure families are aware of the independent travel training offer and can consider this for their young person where appropriate. To look at existing public transport routes and commission more routes to enable young people to travel independently if they are able to.

Recommendation 5:

To have clear guidance on how you intend to adhere to the recommended statutory timescales (max journey of 45 mins for primary and max 75 mins for secondary) whenever possible, and assurance that these times won't be exceeded by adding too many children to a route.

Recommendation 6:

To have clear guidance for parent carers on when they should be applying for transport with clear timescales and key dates.

Recommendation 7:

To ensure parent carers are not penalised by not being given transport for the first term because they apply past the deadline through no fault of their own - when they don't have a named school or a finalised plan.

Recommendation 8:

To have a clear and robust roadmap of how the current application/assessment and delivery processes are going to be significantly changed to ensure that families are not: - Left without transport at the start of term - That families are given a fair and timely decision - That families know the arrangements well ahead of the start of term so that they can prepare their child or young person.

Recommendation 9:

To develop a robust process where SEND, Admissions and transport work together and communicate effectively to ensure the experience for the family is joined up and seamless journey.

Recommendation 10:

The transport team will ensure any changes in policy or practice are done in collaboration with Family Voice Surrey, the third sector and other key partners prior to implementation.

Recommendation 11:

That all outstanding travel allowance payments are issued to parent carers, and all cases that are still waiting for travel assistance are resolved by the end of 2022.

Recommendation 12:

The payment schedule for ITA is changed to September - June rather than October - July to ensure families who accept an ITA are not financially disadvantaged throughout September and October whilst waiting for the first payment to come through.

Next Steps

Present the findings to the Select Committee on the 15th December 2022



Feedback findings to Family Voice Parent Carer members in January 2023



Meet with Liz Mills, Gerry Hughes and Rebecca Threlfall to discuss survey results by the end of January 2023



Publish the survey results and share with Surrey County Council and the third sector by the end of January 2023



Meet with the transport team to discuss lessons learnt and agree actions by the end of January 2023



Agree action card resolution with the transport team - by the end of January 2023



Re run the survey in October 2023 to compare the parent carer experience.



Questions?