

**Outcome of the consultation with parents, schools  
and key stakeholders**

## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation with parents / carers and stakeholders on the proposed revisions to the wording of the existing Special Educational Needs Transport Policy issued in 2003.

## **2. Outcome**

- 2.1 To support and promote opportunities for independent travel for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities taking account of their individual ability and needs.

## **3. Sustainability**

- 3.1 The proposed revisions are sustainable as they are likely to result, over time, in a reduction in the number of vehicles travelling across the City with one child and an increased use of existing public transport systems.

## **4. Summary**

- 4.1 The proposal to implement the revised policy (2008) supports and enables the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda through providing opportunities for children and young people to develop additional independent travel skills to;
- improve opportunity and aspiration
  - make a positive contribution to their community including economic well-being and
  - stay safe, in preparation for adult life.
- 4.2 The needs, difficulties and abilities of each child will be assessed individually and reviewed at least annually. All plans towards independent travel will ensure that there are regular opportunities for the child, their parents / carers and school staff to discuss progress throughout the school year.
- 4.3 The individual circumstances of each family will be considered in the planning of any progression towards independent travel.
- 4.4 Revised wording to the existing Special Educational Needs Transport policy was drafted earlier this year followed by a consultation with parents, carers and a range of professionals including the voluntary sector. Overall, there was good support for the principles of equipping children and young people with the skills they will require to travel as independently as possible, as long as careful planning involving parents, carers and the child's school takes place beforehand.
- 4.5 Respondents also raised some areas of concern and we have outlined how they will be addressed.

## 5. Introduction

- 5.1 Learning to be more independent is a fundamental part of growing up and most people learn the skills required of them through their formative years into young adulthood. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are often protected, understandably, by concerned adults and can grow up dependent on others and lacking the skills that they need to travel as independently as possible.
- 5.2 Evidence suggests that the earlier children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities begin learning about independent travel, the more effective the training, with the benefits staying with them for the rest of their lives. For all children and young people, their journey will begin with small changes and their rate of progression will vary, according to their needs.
- 5.3 Locally, many of our special schools already create and provide opportunities to encourage and train young people towards an optimum level of independence. In addition, the Sheffield Post 16 Partnership has funded a full-time Independent Travel Trainer using LSC grant, who works with colleges, schools, parents / carers and young people to develop these skills.
- 5.4 Neighbouring Local Authorities Barnsley and Rotherham have already implemented similar schemes.
- 5.5 Nationally, there are initiatives to help children and young people with special educational needs learn how to travel independently and safely, according to their ability. For example in London, young people are supported to learn the skills necessary to enable them to cross roads safely and use the complex public transport systems.
- 5.6 It is important to consider each child and young person's very individual needs and work closely with their family, friends and school staff to ensure that an appropriate plan is put in place to support them appropriately whilst maximising the development of their life-skills. Children with complex needs may access a 'scaled down' level of independence but nevertheless, the aspiration should be that each child and young person are considered able to have some level of independence though the degree will vary according to each child.
- 5.7 Responses to the consultation of 2002 showed that more than 89% of respondents agreed that plans to encourage independent travel should be put in place by the school and parents / carers, working in partnership to agreed targets. It was therefore considered necessary to revise the wording of the existing policy to make explicit the ways in which we intend to achieve this.
- 5.8 The revisions to the Special Educational Needs Transport policy (2008) do not represent a change in policy. They build on the principles of the current

policy and give more detail about how Special Educational Needs Transport for children and young people could be arranged and how their level of independence might be increased, over time. There are no changes to existing statutory or discretionary entitlement. We are not seeking to introduce any new qualifying criteria. The existing appeals process remains unchanged.

5.9 All Local Authorities have a statutory duty to review their transport policies from time to time. The Authority's existing Special Educational Needs Transport Policy was last reviewed in 2002.

## **6. The consultation**

6.1 The consultation period lasted from March 4<sup>th</sup> to April 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. In addition, all late responses received to date have been taken into account.

6.2 The Sheffield City Council Parent Partnership Service checked the policy document and the letter to parents for readability before distribution.

6.3 The letter was sent to the parents of every child who currently receives transport inviting them to participate in the consultation and advising how they could contribute to the process. This included a web link to the Sheffield City Council site and information about free computer access through local and City Libraries as well as the availability of paper copies of all documents through their child's school or from the Special Educational Needs Team. On the same day that those letters were sent, a series of briefings with all schools began.

6.4 The briefing was presented to all Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators across the mainstream and special primary and secondary school sectors who were asked to be pro-active in encouraging and supporting parents and carers to participate in the process.

6.5 The letter to parents and carers included advice to families from minority ethnic backgrounds about how the Special Educational Needs Team could support them in their participation of the consultation. This advice was produced in the five most frequently spoken minority ethnic languages across the City.

6.6 Briefings were also provided for the Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Management Team (CYPD) which includes colleagues from the Sensory Impaired Service, Early Years, Children with Disabilities, the Parent Partnership Service and Educational Psychology, so that they too could support the participation of the parents and carers of our most vulnerable children as well as providing their own Service views to the consultation.

6.7 The list of stakeholders who were invited to participate in the consultation was extensive and included all Sheffield School Headteachers across the

mainstream and special primary and secondary phases, Sheffield Health Authority and Service Districts.

6.8 A complete list of all those who were invited to participate is included as Appendix A to this document.

## 7. Consultation findings

### Question 1

Do you agree that young people should be encouraged to use public transport once they are able to travel independently?

### Question 2

Do you think that 400 (four hundred) metres is a reasonable walking distance for children / young people and their parent / carers (where appropriate) to travel to meet their free school transport? (This will not apply to children / young people or their parent / carers if they have complex medical or mobility difficulties)

<b>Comment</b>	<b>CYPD Response</b>
<p>The majority of respondents agreed that young people should be encouraged to use public transport</p>	<p>In all cases an individual plan will be discussed and agreed between parents / carers, school and the young person</p>
<p>Many comments supported the principle of independent travel so long as it was supported appropriately</p>	
<p>A maximum walking distance of four hundred metres was considered reasonable for children and young people (accompanied by their parent / carer where appropriate) in order to meet their home to school transport assistance</p>	<p>Children and young people (accompanied by parents / carers as appropriate) will not be expected to travel more than four hundred metres to meet their home to school transport assistance.</p>
<p>Strong representation was made that all children and young people must be assessed on an individual basis and any plans to move towards using public transport must be supported appropriately</p>	<p>We plan to assess every child's abilities and needs on an individual basis through the Annual Review. This will include consideration of the walking distance for the child or young person of up to four hundred metres to meet their transport assistance.</p>
<p>The individual abilities of each child and young person must be considered in order to conclude that the walking distance would be</p>	

<p>manageable for them</p> <p>Some children will be incapable of using public transport and the proposal unsuitable</p> <p>If the child or young person is capable then this is a positive idea that will help to reduce travelling time for children</p> <p>Walking to a pick-up-point will create practical difficulties especially where other children in the family need to be taken to school</p>	<p>Each child will be assessed individually. Children and young people with very complex needs may require on-going highly supported transport assistance.</p> <p>The individual circumstances of each family will be considered in the planning of any progression towards independent travel.</p>
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7.1 There are already arrangements covering 'safe routes' as designated by the Local Authority under Sheffield City Council's main Transport Policy which will apply equally to this policy.

7.2 The Statutory Duty to provide Transport assistance for children and young people with special educational needs relates to the child's entitlement to appropriate transport to and from school.

### Question 3

Are you clear how eligibility for transport assistance is decided for children and young people who have special educational needs?

Comment	CYPD Response
<p>A good number of respondents were clear about how entitlement to special educational needs transport assistance is decided</p> <p>Some respondents were not clear about eligibility.</p> <p>Some advised they had not received any information about eligibility for transport assistance and that the</p>	<p>Clear, concise, plain English information to be distributed to parents / carers advising them of eligibility for transport assistance. Translated or Braille versions will be made available on request.</p>

policy documentation is too detailed	
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#### Question 4

Are you happy with the range of transport assistance options available to children / young people?

Comment	CYPD Response
Some respondents are happy with the range of transport options	We will communicate and discuss with all parents and carers the range of transport options available
Some do not know what options are available	
Some respondents would like more options	

#### Question 5

Do you know how to apply for transport assistance?

Comment	CYPD Response
The majority of respondents know how to apply for transport assistance	We will communicate with all parents and carers to explain how and under what circumstances they can apply for special transport assistance

#### Question 6

Do you know how the Appeal process works?

Comment	CYPD Response
Most respondents were unclear about the appeals process	We will communicate with all parents and carers to explain the appeals process

#### Question 7

If you have any suggestions to improve our consultations in the future, please tell us your ideas as to how they can be improved.

Comment	CYPD response
The policy document is too complicated	

<p>The associated documents were not clear</p>	<p>Future consultation documents to be considered by parent representatives for readability.</p>
<p>Schools should have been more involved</p>	
<p>This is a cost cutting exercise</p>	<p>The independent travel skills, needs and abilities of each child are paramount. This will be</p>
<p>The current transport provision is excellent</p>	<p>communicated to parents as part of the feedback from the consultation</p>

7.3 The underlying principles of all comments will be retained and used to inform any future consultations.

## **8. The implementation of the revised policy**

8.1 It is clear from the consultation that whilst support for the revised policy is good, there remains a range of concerns about the implementation. Therefore, we plan to proceed in a careful, well planned manner where each child's needs, difficulties and abilities will be considered individually with their parents and carers involved fully in the planning and implementation of any proposed changes. We recommend that the ideal forum for this assessment to take place will be through the Annual Review of the child or young person's Statement of Special Educational Needs.

## **9. Assessment**

9.1 Each child and young person's individual needs and difficulties will be reviewed and assessed using information from the most recent Annual Review.

9.2 The SEN Code of Practice states that the purpose of the Annual Review is:

- To consider any additional special needs which may have become apparent during the previous year
- To assess a child's progress towards meeting their targets
- To collate and record information for use by the school and other professionals to plan their support for the child
- To review the additional provision made for the child including the appropriateness of any special equipment
- To set new targets for the forthcoming year

9.3 To the Annual Review meeting the Headteacher must invite:

- Parents (for children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority the Social Worker)
- A relevant teacher
- A Local Authority Representative
- Any other person who they feel would be appropriate such as representatives from health or social care

9.4 If a representative cannot attend the meeting they should be invited to submit a written report on their involvement with the child over the past year.

9.5 Parents should be encouraged by the school to contribute their views and attend the review. Wherever possible, the child or young person should be involved in the review process including attendance for at least part of the meeting, as appropriate and according to their special educational needs. Where a child or their family has English as an additional language, the timescale for planning the review should take account of the need to:

- Translate any relevant documentation into the language spoken at home by the family
- Ensure that interpreters are available to the child and family both at the planning stage and at the meeting
- Ensure that any professionals from the child's community have similar translation facilities
- Try to ensure that a bilingual support teacher or teacher of English as an additional family is available to the child and family

9.6 Where a child or their family have a communication difficulty, similar attention should be given to ensuring that information is available to them and that appropriate representation at the review meeting is available to them. Where a child or family has a visual impairment, the provision of information in Braille, large print or tape as appropriate should be considered.

9.7 Where a child is subject to a Care Order, the Social Worker designated is regarded as that child's parent.

## **10. Planning**

10.1 From the information gained through the Annual Review meeting, the Authority will consider whether:

- a child or young person is able to meet their transport at an agreed pick-up point no more than four hundred metres from their home address, accompanied by their parent / carer as appropriate (unless their parent / carer is disabled and unable to accompany them)
- A young person is ready to begin a planned and supported approach towards using public transport

- 10.2 If so, an appropriate plan will be agreed between all relevant participants including parents and / or carers. Through working in partnership to deliver the plan, the young person will become increasingly skilled and enabled. As parents / carers learn more about their child's abilities and the strategies they are taught to manage everyday situations, including unpredictable events, their anxieties will be lessened.
- 10.3 Every child or young person's abilities will be considered and assessed on an individual basis. We will then work with each school across the City as appropriate, according to the child's own plan.
- 10.4 It is recognised that for a small minority of children and young people with very complex medical needs there will be a continuing need for highly supported travel arrangements.

## **11. Review**

- 11.1 Individual travel arrangements and plans will be reviewed as part of the Annual Review or more frequently as agreed between the participants.
- 11.2 The Special Educational Needs Transport Policy will be reviewed annually and report to the Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Strategic Partnership Group.

## **12. Timescales**

- Information from the most recent Annual Review will be considered from September 2008 to inform the assessment as detailed above.
- When assessments have been completed and plans made the new arrangements will begin on a school-by-school basis
- If a parent / carer would like their child to progress towards independent travel more quickly it can be raised in the Annual Review meeting or through discussion with the child's class teacher
- The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice allows parents to call an Annual or interim review at any time

## **13. Financial implications**

- 13.1 The current demand-led budget is £5.5 million and is used to transport approximately twelve hundred Sheffield children and young people. As each child's individual needs and abilities are at the centre of the decision-making about progression towards independent travel there is a degree of uncertainty about the potential financial impact as a result of implementing the revised policy. Through gradual change we will be able to understand and evaluate the financial effect of the revised policy over time and to adjust the CYPD budget as necessary.

## **14. Environmental impact**

14.1 There are no negative environmental implications for the implementation of the revised policy. There are likely to be benefits from implementation due to an increase in children and young people sharing transport vehicles and an increased use of existing public transport as appropriate.

## **15. Equal Opportunities**

15.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached.

15.2 There are no negative implications for equality issues in the proposal.

15.3 The proposal strengthens the rights of children and young people with Special Educational Needs to develop life skills and promote their ability to travel as independently as possible

## **16. Legal Implications**

16.1 There are no legal implications in relation to the revised SEN Transport Policy (2008)

## **17. Recommendations**

17.1 To agree the proposed revisions to the existing Special Educational Needs Transport Policy and the implementation of the revised Special Educational Needs Transport Policy (2008).

# Appendix A

## Circulation List

### Stakeholders:

ASD Support Association
Bishop of Sheffield CofE
Bishop of Hallam RC Dices
Black Community Forum
Chief Constable
Council Wide Heads of Service
DCSF - the Department for Children, Schools and Families
Director of Child Health Services
Director of Programmes - The Sheffield College
Directorate - Paul Makin
Disability Consultative Committee
Disability Information Service for Children (DISC)
Downs Syndrome Association
Educational Psychology Service
Education Action Zone
Elected Council Members
Ethnic Minority Groups – (cypd-business-support-development.inclusion@sheffield.gov.uk)
Forum of People with Disabilities
Headteachers of all Schools
HIMP Children's Services
Inclusion Forum
KS3 Inclusion
LDD Management Team
Legal and Governance
MENCAP (Regional)
MENCAP (Sheffield)
Multi-Agency Steering Group
NAGM – National Association of School Governors
NASEN Special Editor
Office for Public Management
Ofsted
Out of School Network
PACES
Partnership for Health
Parent Partnership Service
Peter Liver - NSPCC
PHAB
Primary Inclusion
Race Equality Council
RNID - The Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People
Ryegate Children's Centre
SADACCA - Sheffield and District African Caribbean Community Association
Safer City Group
SASGB - Sheffield Association of School Governing Bodies

School of Education Sheffield University
Schools Advice and Information Service
SCOPE
SEN Partnership Board (0 - 19's)
SEN Section
Senior Managers Forum
Service District Managers
Sheffield Advice and Conciliation Service
Sheffield College
Sheffield Early Years and Childcare Partnership
Sheffield First
Sheffield Futures
Sheffield Health Authority
Sheffield Libraries
SIGN - Sheffield Information Giving Network
Social Inclusion Board Strategic Advice Committee
SOVA – Supporting Others through Volunteer Action
Specialist Support Services
Speech and Language Therapy Service
Spring Lane College
SY Passenger Transport Executive
Transport and General Workers Union
The College Marketing Manager
Unison
Voluntary Action Sheffield
Young Children's Service
Youth Service
Transport department CYPD

**Schools:**

**Consultation information and copy of parent letter emailed to all Sheffield Nursery, Primary and Secondary schools and Sixth Form Colleges, Academies and Special Schools.**

**Email address available:**

**<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=64137>**

# Appendix B

## Consultation statistics

### At a glance – overall

- 1117 letters were sent to parents / carers.
- 19 Hard copies of the consultation documents were requested and sent.
- 5 copies of the consultation documents were translated and sent.

## Response Statistics

- 122 completed questionnaires were returned.
- Approximately 220 written comments were sent by post or email.
- The Yes / No answers to the questionnaire were counted and collated and are displayed as totals in a table and in percentages in a series of pie charts, for each question.
- The written comments were analysed for patterns and common themes.
- An overall response rate of approximately 11% was recorded

## Questionnaire - 122 responses

- 21 questionnaires were completed by stakeholder / partner agency
- 101 questionnaires were completed by Parent or Carer

## Therefore of the overall responses

- 17% questionnaires were completed by stakeholder / partner agency
- 83% questionnaires were completed by Parent or Carer

### Total Overall Responses:

	Agree	Do not Agree	Don't Know
Question 1	78	18	26
Question 2	66	37	19
Question 3	67	36	19
Question 4	81	13	28
Question 5	86	36	n/a
Question 6	45	77	n/a

### Responses from Parent / Carers:

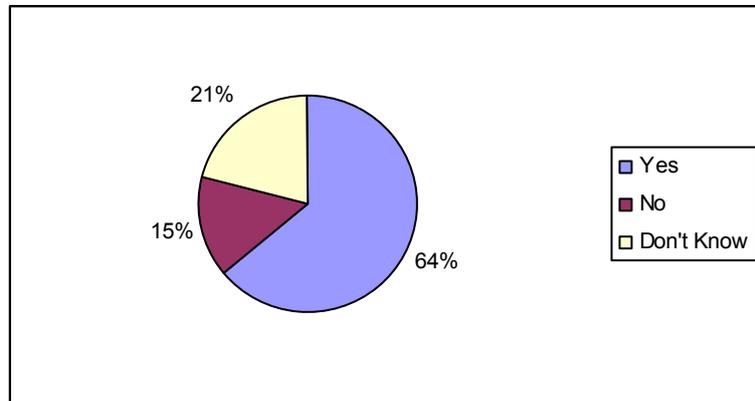
	Agree	Do not Agree	Don't Know
Question 1	59	16	26
Question 2	48	34	19
Question 3	53	30	18
Question 4	65	10	26
Question 5	68	33	n/a
Question 6	30	71	n/a

### Responses from Stakeholders:

	Agree	Do not Agree	Don't Know
Question 1	19	2	0
Question 2	18	3	0
Question 3	14	6	1
Question 4	16	3	2
Question 5	18	3	n/a
Question 6	15	6	n/a

## Question 1

Do you agree that young people should be encouraged to use public transport once they are able to travel independently?



Percentage from 122 responses

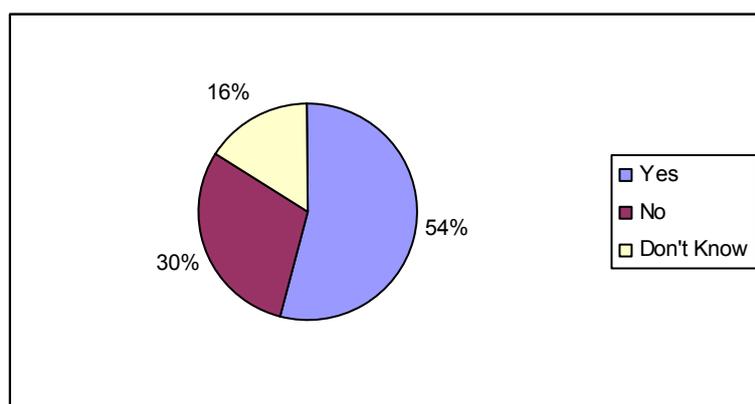
### Summary of the 63 comments left:

The majority of comments received (48%), concerned the need for each case to be assessed on an individual basis and how this assessment would take place. Many comments supported the principle of independent travel (22%), so long as each case was assessed and supported correctly. A small number of responses expressed that this idea would not be suitable due to their individual circumstances (5%).

There were concerns about the danger involved for children both with road safety (4%) and being the subject of bullying (5%). Some respondents believed that SEN children would be incapable of using public transport (9%). Others felt that this would increase the stress on parents (3%) and would be difficult due to the unreliability of public transport (1%).

## Question 2

Do you think that 400 (four hundred) metres is a reasonable walking distance for children / young people and their parent / carers (where appropriate) to travel to meet their free school transport? (This will not apply to children / young people or their parent / carers if they have complex medical or mobility difficulties)



Percentage from 122 responses

### Summary of the 48 comments left:

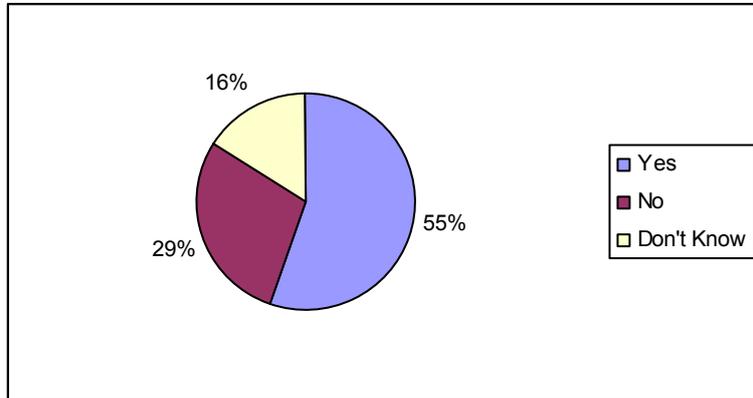
A number of responses were concerned that there were other children in their family to be taken to school and the practical problems this would pose when walking to a pick up point (25%). Other worries included traffic danger (2%), what would happen in adverse weather conditions (8%), unreliable public transport (9%), that the parent could be late to the pick up point (3%), or that the distance is too far (3%). 11% of responses felt this proposal was unsuitable for their individual circumstances.

11% of responses agreed that if the child was capable then this was a positive idea and would help reduce travelling time for the children.

19% of responses thought that walking this distance depended on the individual capabilities of the child. They also thought it depended on where the child lives, if there was a safe pavement to walk on, and if the pick up point provided shelter.

### Question 3

Are you clear how eligibility for transport assistance is decided for children and young people who have special educational needs?



Percentage from 122 responses

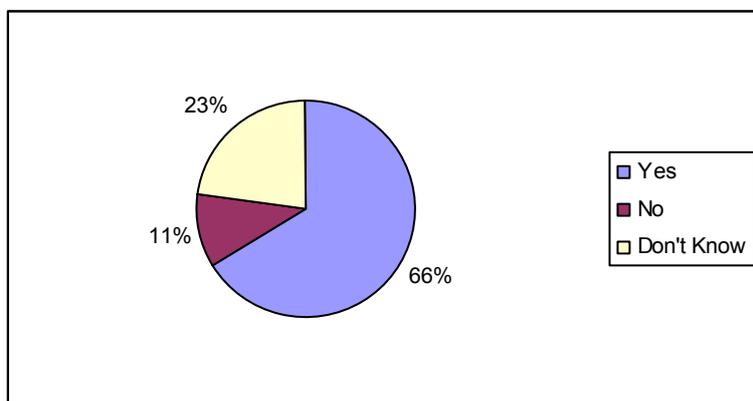
#### Summary of the 20 comments left:

45% of responses indicated they had a general understanding of how eligibility for transport assistance is decided.

Of the responses that were not clear, 20% felt they were unclear about eligibility for their individual circumstances. 10% advised they had not received any information or seen any publications regarding this issue and 10% felt the transport policy documentation is too detailed and a summary would be more useful.

### Question 4

Are you happy with the range of transport assistance options available to children / young people?



Percentage from 122 responses

**Summary of the 33 comments left:**

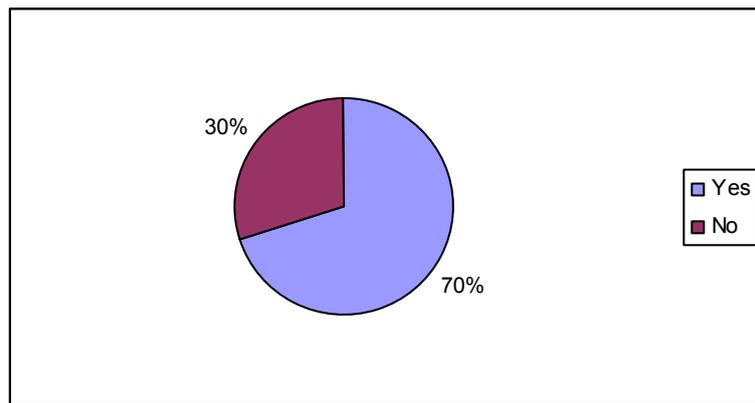
39% of responses stated that they were happy with the range of options that are available.

21% of the respondents who left comments said they did not know what options were available to them, 6% thought the options were not made clear in the policy and 12% said they would like further options.

Only a very small number of responses were not happy with the current options. 1 response stated that taxis were unreliable and another comment stated that the current options do not enable SEN children to access extended school activities.

**Question 5**

Do you know how to apply for transport assistance?



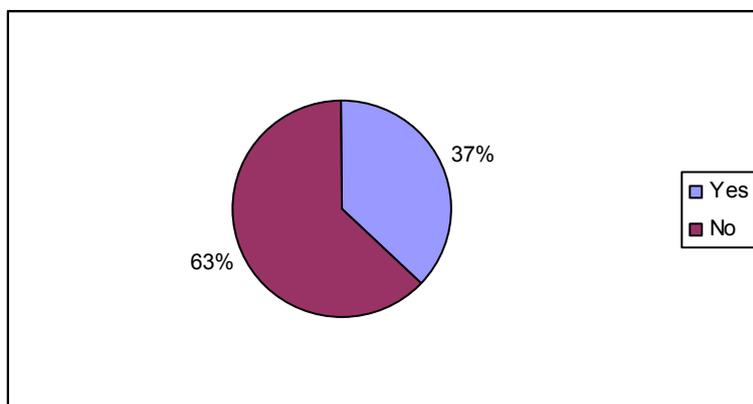
Percentage from 122 responses

**Summary of the 10 comments left:**

Of the small number of comments left for this question, the majority of respondents knew how to apply for transport assistance, or had their application dealt with by the school. Only two comments stated they did not know how to apply for assistance or had never been informed.

## Question 6

Do you know how the Appeal process works?



Percentage from 122 responses

### Summary of the 16 comments left:

Only a small number of comments were left for this question. Of these, 3 responses commented they did not know there was an appeals process or how it worked. The other responses indicated that the process was either known or that the respondents knew where to go if they ever needed to use the service.

## Question 7

If you have any suggestions to improve our consultations in the future, please tell us your ideas as to how they can be improved.

### Summary of the 32 comments left:

The general comments that were left against this question were mixed and covered a variety of positives and negatives concerning this consultation.

The consultation was criticised for the policy being too complicated and the associated documentation not clear (13% of responses). It was expressed that the impact of the potential changes to the transport policy on families with children with special educational needs had not been properly outlined or addressed. The initial website link did not work (4%) and some felt schools should have been more involved (9%).

13% of responses said that this was a cost cutting exercise and 9% felt this consultation was causing extra stress on parents. 4% felt the transport contractors should have been informed and 7% of comments thought the consultation should have been wider and feature more questions. The

accessibility of the consultation was questioned in 9% of responses, stating that the online facility was not available to all.

7% of responses felt the questionnaire should have been tailored to each individual child and circumstance.

13% of responses stated that the current transport provision was excellent and 2% thought this consultation provided a very easy way to give views.

Finally, there was an expectation expressed that detailed feedback should be received by the special educational needs community on the outcomes of the consultation. This feedback should include parents, addressing possible language and learning disability barriers as well as computer literacy and ownership issues and must also ensure multi-agency coverage.