



HPCI's SEND Transport Survey Findings – September 2026

HPCI received **84 responses** from families regarding SEND transport arrangements at the start of the 2026 academic year. Families gave their child's transport an average satisfaction score of **2.7 out of 5** (where 1 is lowest, 5 is highest), indicating a mixed experience overall, with many families reporting significant challenges during the first weeks of term.

Of the 84 responses received, 48 (57%) mentioned communication concerns, making this the most frequently occurring theme. Twenty-six respondents (31%) described problems with arrangements before or at the start of term, while 23 (27%) reported delays, late pickups or transport not arriving. In contrast, 22 respondents (26%) provided positive feedback about drivers, passenger assistants or providers, particularly where they offered continuity and proactive communication. The findings suggest that the greatest opportunities for improvement lie in communication, start-of-term planning and consistency of arrangements.

Survey responses at a glance

Measure	Result
Total responses	84
Average satisfaction score	2.7/5
Local authority arranged transport	60 (71%)
Personal Transport Budget (PTB)	14 (17%)
Mixture of both	4 (5%)
Other arrangements	6 (7%)

1. Communication was the dominant concern

Communication was by far the most frequently recurring theme, mentioned in 48 responses (57%).

Families regularly reported:

- difficulty contacting the transport team
- unanswered emails and telephone calls
- lack of information before term started
- late notification of transport arrangements
- no notification of changes to drivers, PAs, vehicles or routes
- having to repeatedly chase for information

Communication appeared as an issue across both local authority-arranged transport and Personal Transport Budget (PTB) arrangements.

2. Start-of-term arrangements caused difficulties for many families

Twenty-six respondents (31%) reported problems before or during the first week of term, including:

- transport not being arranged in time
- contracts not having been finalised
- transport providers not receiving information
- families receiving details less than 24 hours before transport commenced
- transport failing to arrive
- children missing education
- parents having to provide transport themselves at very short notice

Many responses suggested that once arrangements were established, services often improved, but the transition into the new academic year was problematic.

3. Delays and reliability remain significant concerns

Twenty-three families (27%) reported:

- late collections
- late arrivals at school or college
- transport not arriving at all
- repeated lateness across multiple days
- unreliable services during the first weeks of term

Some parents reported children arriving over 30 minutes late, while others described transport not arriving or children missing school entirely due to transport issues.

4. Consistency is particularly important for SEND pupils

A recurring theme was the impact of frequent changes, mentioned by 19 respondents (23%).

Families reported:

- multiple drivers within the first week
- multiple passenger assistants (PAs)
- vehicle changes
- route changes
- additional pupils being added to routes without notice

Several respondents explained that unexpected changes can be particularly difficult for children who rely on routine, predictability and preparation.

5. Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) generated mixed feedback

PTB feedback was mixed, featuring in 17 responses (20%). Just over two-thirds were predominantly negative, with around 20% mixed/qualified, and the final 20% positive.

Positive comments included:

- payments received before the start of term
- appreciation for flexibility where arrangements worked well

However concerns included:

- delayed payments
 - uncertainty about whether PTBs had been approved or renewed
 - inability to obtain responses from the travel team
 - concerns that PTBs did not meet actual transport costs
 - concerns about the suitability of PTBs for some post-16 learners and families
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6. Safety and safeguarding concerns were raised

Although less common than communication concerns, some responses described:

- children being forgotten during collections
- incorrect handovers
- staff not wearing seatbelts
- concerns regarding booster seats and vehicle safety
- concerns about driver awareness of children's needs
- concerns regarding vehicle condition and suitability

These responses represent a relatively small proportion of overall responses but warrant further consideration because of their potential impact on child safety and wellbeing.

Positive Findings

The survey also identified a number of positive themes.

About 26% of responses including positive feedback, with families frequently praising:

- individual drivers
- passenger assistants
- transport providers who communicated proactively
- continuity of staff from previous years
- reliability once arrangements were established

A particularly notable finding was that families often distinguished between frontline staff and the wider transport system.

Even where parents expressed significant frustrations about communication, planning or administration, they often spoke positively about the drivers and passenger assistants directly supporting their children.

Key Messages HPCI will feed back to Hertfordshire County Council

1. Communication remains the single biggest area for improvement.
2. Start-of-term transport mobilisation requires review.
3. Greater consistency of drivers, PAs and routes would benefit many SEND pupils.
4. Reliability and punctuality continue to affect families' experiences.
5. PTB administration and communication remain areas of concern for some families.
6. Positive practice exists and is strongly associated with consistent staffing and proactive communication.

Annex 1

Thematic breakdown of comments

Theme	Responses	%
Communication	48	57%
Start of term	26	31%
Delays/reliability	23	27%
Driver/PA changes	19	23%
PTB issues	17	20%
Positive feedback	22	26%
Safety concerns	10	12%

*Responses often included multiple themes, so totals exceed 84.

Figures are based on thematic coding of free-text responses.