

London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham  
Consultation on Transportation Services for SEN Children

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## Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Methodology.....	3
3. Executive Summary.....	5
4. Findings.....	7

## 1. Introduction

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London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham commissioned The Campaign Company to independently analyse and report on the findings of the consultation on transport services for SEN children in the borough.

The consultation was conducted following complaints that LBHF had received regarding the quality of the service provided by the current providers of the transport. Particularly that since the service was outsourced in April 2014 LBHF had received an influx in the number and type of concerns raised by parents, carers and children.

LBHF held a meeting on 8 July 2014, where some of these complaints and concerns were raised by parents and stakeholders. As a result of the meeting LBHF established a new Passenger Transport Working Party, made up of parent forum representatives, governors and Headteachers of Jack Tizard and Queensmill schools. The working party sought to monitor the service and identify where and how things needed to improve. Through their monitoring capabilities, the working group saw that complaints continued throughout the Autumn term and they were concerned with the continued levels of dissatisfaction expressed.

The Passenger Transport Working Party considered different options, one being that the best way to improve the service would be to bring it back in-house and be run directly by the Council. LBHF therefore undertook a consultation to gather views on the service from parents and carers to help inform any future decisions about the service.

## 2. Methodology

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LBHF conducted the consultation through a paper and online survey. LBHF posted a paper copy of the survey out to the 214 parents of children and young people who use the transport and also additionally emailed an online link to those they had email addresses for to ensure that parents had the choice as to how to respond and were encouraged to do so through different types of communication.

LBHF increased the response rate through reminder emails. They also liaised with the two schools where the majority of SEN children attend in order to assist them in encouraging parents and carers to complete the survey.

It should be noted that the consultation took place over the Christmas holiday period which is likely to be a factor in the response rate achieved.

Overall 79 responses were received from 214 parents/carers who were sent the consultation. This represented a response rate of 37%. Four responses were incomplete but their answers have been included where applicable.

The results have been analysed using MS Excel and Nvivo software for open questions. Results are presented in count and percentage form. Where percentages do not add up to 100% this is due to rounding.

### 3. Executive Summary

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#### Satisfaction

- Nearly three quarters (71%) of those who responded to the consultation are satisfied or very satisfied with the current transport service. Only 20% disclosed feeling dissatisfied with the current service.
- The service is reported as punctual by over two thirds (68%) of those who responded to the consultation however just under a third indicated that the service is inconsistently punctual where some days they wait more than 15 minutes.

#### Communication with Transport Providers

- 49% of respondents felt that in general overall communication of the transport service is good to an extent however over a quarter (27%) felt it was poor.
- Communication was considered poor in the context of communicating delays in transporting the children with over a third (35%) indicating communication on this was poor or very poor.
- This was also reflected in the responsiveness of the company towards issues or problems, with a third indicating it as poor or very poor.

#### Driver and Escorts

- The service that the escorts and the drivers provided was very positive with 88% indicating the escorts were good or excellent.
- Parents were positive about the escort's ability to manage their children's behaviour (69% indicating it was good or excellent) and were also positive about how they helped children with equipment (82% indicating it was good or excellent).

#### Safety and Comfort

- Safety of getting their children off and on the bus was not considered a concern by the parents with only 4% indicating a concern about safety or comfort to some extent.
- Similarly there was little concern about the safety and security of the vehicles safety belts and seats, doors and handles with only 1% indicating any concern.
- Respondents were also confident of the comfort and quality of the vehicles their children travelled in with only 5% indicating any level of concern.

#### Improving the Service

- The communication of the transport service was considered most in need of improvement. Particularly in terms of communicating issues about punctuality and keeping parents informed of who is escorting their child on any given day.

- 43% of those consulted felt the service would improve if it was run directly with council staff and vehicles. 43% of respondents to the consultation who felt the service would improve is equal to 15% of the total number of parents and carers of SEN children who use the service.
- 20% felt it would result in a worse service if the Council ran it directly. Importantly 21% indicated that they felt they 'did not know' if it would improve or worsen the service.
- 43% of those supporting this option is much higher than those who actively disclosed dissatisfaction with the service (only 20%). Therefore whilst the majority are satisfied with the service there is a proportion of those satisfied who feel that it could be improved.
- Respondents supportive of the change felt that it would result in more reliable, well trained and communicative staff which would improve the service overall.
- There was a concern that whatever the change, the upheaval that this can bring must be managed carefully for the benefit of the children as initial problems are likely.

## 4. Findings

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60 of the respondents to the consultation had children that normally travelled by bus, 10 usually by taxi and 6 used both.

Type of transport	Count
Bus	60
Taxi	10
They have used both	6

Fig 1: Please confirm whether, since April 2014, your child has normally travelled to school by bus or by taxi.

### Satisfaction with current service

Respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they are with the current service. The majority of respondents are either very satisfied (43%) or satisfied (28%) with the service and 20% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. (Fig 2)

	Count	Percentage
Very satisfied	33	43%
Satisfied	21	28%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	9%
Dissatisfied	10	13%
Very dissatisfied	5	7%

Fig 2: Overall how satisfied would you say you are with the current service?

## Punctuality

Respondents reported that levels of punctuality are overall good, with 68% of respondents agreeing the transport arrives in time to pick their children up and drop them off within 15 minutes of the scheduled time in the morning and 55% agreeing that this is the case in the evening. However, between 20% and 30% of respondents indicated that the punctuality of the provider is inconsistent, as they can arrive more than 15 minutes early or late on some days but on time on others in the morning or after school. (Fig 3 and Fig 4)

	Count	Percentage
Yes	52	68%
No	8	11%
Can't say, (can be more than 15 minutes late or early on certain days)	16	21%

Fig 3: Does the transport arrive within 15 minutes of the scheduled time to take your child to school in the morning?

Yes	42	55%
No	13	17%
Can't say, (can be more than 15 minutes late or early on certain days)	21	28%

Fig 4: Does the transport arrive within 15 minutes of the scheduled time to bring your child back from school in the evening?



### Communication with Transport

Respondents reported that overall communication with the transport was good, with 49% stating that the service was either excellent or good. However over a quarter (27%) of respondents expressed that the communication with transport overall was poor. (Fig 5)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	12	16%
Good	24	33%
Adequate	13	18%
Poor	12	16%
Very poor	8	11%
Not relevant/don't know	4	5%

Fig 5: overall communication with the transport company

When asked about the quality of communication from the transport when there were delays in dropping off or picking up children, 48% of respondents stated that the service was either good or excellent, with 35% of respondents commenting that the quality of this communication was either very poor (21%) or poor (14%). (Fig 6)

Excellent	14	20%
Good	20	28%
Adequate	10	14%
Poor	10	14%
Very poor	15	21%
Not relevant/don't know	2	3%

Fig6: communication when there are delays in picking up or dropping off children

When asked about the quality of the transport company's responsiveness, over half of respondents expressed that the service was good (30%), excellent (15%) or adequate (10%). A further third of the respondents felt that the company's responsiveness was either poor (18%) or very poor (15%). (Fig 7)

Excellent	11	15%
Good	21	30%
Adequate	7	10%
Poor	13	18%
Very poor	11	15%
Not relevant/don't know	8	11%

Fig7: responsiveness of transport company when any difficulties have arisen

### Drivers and Escorts

A large majority of respondents were happy with the service the escorts provided helping children on and off the bus, 51% commented that it was excellent and 37% said it was good. Only 4% of respondents felt that this service was poor (3%) or very poor (1%). (Fig 8)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	38	51%
Good	28	37%
Adequate	6	8%
Poor	2	3%
Very Poor	1	1%

Fig 8: ability of the escorts to help children on and off the bus

Respondents were also satisfied overall with the ability of the escorts to understand and manage the children's behavioural changes, 69% felt that the provision of this service was either excellent (40%) or good (29%) and only 5% of respondents thought that the service was either poor (3%) or very poor (1%). (Fig 9)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	29	40%
Good	21	29%
Adequate	10	14%
Poor	3	4%
Very Poor	1	1%
Not relevant/don't know	9	12%

Fig 9: ability of the escorts to understand and manage any behavioural challenges your child may have in the bus

Again, a large majority of respondents (82%) felt that the escorts ability to help the children with equipment was either good or excellent. Only 2% of respondents thought that the escorts ability to do this was either poor or very poor. (Fig 10)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	35	47%
Good	26	35%
Adequate	6	8%
Poor	1	1%
Very Poor	1	1%
Not relevant/don't know	5	7%

Fig 10: ability of the escorts to help your child put on seat belts or handle other equipment such as wheelchairs, aids etc.

A majority of respondents felt that the driver or escort's ability to communicate with them or their children was either excellent (49%) or good (29%). Only 5% of respondents felt the communication of the drivers or escorts was poor or very poor. (Fig 11)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	36	49%
Good	21	29%
Adequate	10	14%
Poor	3	4%
Very Poor	1	1%
Not relevant/don't know	2	3%

Fig 11: Ability of the driver or escort to communicate with your child and you

### Safety and comfort of buses and taxis

When asked how easy it was for the children to get in and off the bus, most of the respondents were very happy with this aspect of the service. 45% of respondents commented that this was good, with a further 32% stating that the ease of getting in and off the bus was excellent. Only 4% of respondents felt that this was poor or very poor. (Fig 12)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	24	32%
Good	34	45%
Adequate	12	16%
Poor	1	1%
Very Poor	2	3%
Not relevant/don't know	3	4%
Total	76	100%

Fig 12: Easy to get in and get off the bus (steps, ramps, etc.)

Overall, respondents felt that the comfort and quality provided by the transport service was either good (41%) or excellent (29%), a further 23% of respondents felt that the comfort and quality of the vehicle was adequate whilst just a small number of respondents commented that it was very poor (4%) or poor (1%). (Fig 13)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	21	29%
Good	30	41%
Adequate	17	23%
Poor	1	1%
Very Poor	3	4%
Not relevant/don't know	1	1%

Fig 13: Comfort and Quality of the vehicle

Again when respondents were asked about the security of the vehicles' seats and seatbelts, a third replied that they were excellent and a further 36% commented that they were good. Almost a quarter of respondents replied that they were adequate, only 1% of respondents said they were poor. (Fig 14)

	Count	Percentage
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Excellent	24	33%
Good	26	36%
Adequate	17	23%
Poor	1	1%
Not relevant/don't know	5	7%

Fig 14: Security of Seats and seat belts

Most respondents were satisfied with the amount of space for the children to move around inside the vehicle. A third of respondents thought that the space for the children to move around the vehicle was good, over a half of respondents felt that the space was adequate (27%) or excellent (26%). Just 6% of respondents felt that the space was poor or very poor. (Fig 15)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	19	26%
Good	24	33%
Adequate	20	27%
Poor	2	3%
Very Poor	2	3%
Not relevant/don't know	6	8%

Fig15: Adequate space to move around

Most respondents were very happy with the safety of the vehicles' door and handles, 91% commented that they were either good (40%), excellent (29%) or adequate (22%), just 1% of those asked felt that the safety of doors and handles was poor. (Fig 16)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	21	29%
Good	29	40%
Adequate	16	22%
Poor	1	1%
Not relevant/don't know	6	8%

Fig 16: Safety of doors and handles

Almost all respondents were satisfied with the safety of parking within walking distance of their home as either excellent (46%), good (35%) or adequate (17%). Just two respondents were dissatisfied with the safety of parking stating that it was poor. (Fig 17)

	Count	Percentage
Excellent	33	46%
Good	25	35%
Adequate	12	17%
Poor	2	3%

Fig 17: Safety parking within reasonable walking distance of home

### Improving the service

When asked to rank four different ways of improving the service in order of importance, the majority of respondents 42 stated communication as the most important aspect of the service for improvement. 13 respondents felt that escorts' ability to understand and manage the children's needs was the most important factor, where 9 felt that punctuality was the most important area to be looked at for improvement and 7 commented that the quality of the transport and driving was the area that was most important to improve. (Fig 18)

	1	2	3	4
Communication	42 or 58%	10 or 14%	13 or 18%	8 or 11%
Punctuality	9 or 24%	10 or 26%	7 or 18%	12 or 32%
Ability of escorts to understand and manage my child's needs and that of the other children sharing the transport	13 or 37%	12 or 34%	5 or 14%	5 or 14%
The quality of the transport and driving	7 or 19%	16 or 43%	8 or 22%	6 or 16%

Fig18: rank how important each of these aspects of the service is, where 1 is the most important and 4 is the least important.

When asked what other suggestions or comments they had about improving the home to school transport service.

- 48 respondents answered this question
- The most common issues for respondents were communication from the company and punctuality. Some respondents specifically asked that they be contacted if and when the transport is running late:

*“My child is often left waiting on the street for an hour on many occasions, at times never collected at all. I am not unreasonable, communication needs to be used if running late”*

- Another common concern was a lack of driver and escort consistency, these respondents saw consistency of staff as extremely important to their child’s wellbeing:

*“Often my son is brought home by someone I have never seen before in my life, and presumably, he has never seen them before either. I would like to know who is looking after my child, at least to know that it would be one of a team.”*

- Several respondents made positive comments about the escorts and drivers or about the company in general.
- Some respondents specifically state that the service should be run by Hammersmith and Fulham at this stage to ensure these improvements are made.
- A few respondents suggest that the staff could be better trained to deal with disabled children and there are concerns regarding the quality of the actual vehicles raised by some respondents.
- Specific suggestions about improvement to the service included a request that the bus company provide parents with performance reviews and a one request for entertainment in the buses.

*“Something to entertain children while travelling(TV screen?), for example, our child often falls asleep during the journey, then doesn't want to go to bed at usual time which results in difficulties with waking up in the morning”*

### **Possible change to a council provided service**

Respondents were asked whether they thought that running some or all of the transport services directly with council staff and vehicles would result in a better or worse service. Close to half (43%) of respondents felt that this would result in a better service whilst just 20% felt that this would result in a worse service.

Another 16% of respondents felt that the service being run directly by the council would make little difference and 21% didn’t know whether they thought provision would be better or worse. (Fig 19)

	Count	Percentage
I feel this is likely to result in a better service	32	43%
I feel this is likely to result in a worse service	12	20%
I feel this will make little difference either way	15	16%

Don't know	16	21%
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Fig 19: Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

The respondents were asked if they had any other views on the proposal to transfer services or aspects of the service to the council.

- 43 respondents answered this question
- Respondents tended to highlight the need for reliable, well-trained, communicative staff to provide and good quality transport service for their children.
- Several respondents felt that this could be achieved by returning the running of the service to the council:

*"The volume of complaints would likely lessen with a return to the tried and tested Council service. The new service has had enough time to work out the "kinks" in its service."*

- Other respondents, however, felt that the current company are able to provide a better service:

*"I also believe that a professional transport company has a bigger scale operation and therefore arguably more experience in operating this service than the relatively small council transport."*

- Some respondent expressed concern about potential upheaval if the service changes hands again.

*"If the service were to be reabsorbed into Council hands the change itself is inevitably going to cause new teething problems."*