

## Contact School and College Transport for 16–19 Year Olds

This online survey gathered responses from 910 families about post-16 transport for young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The SurveyMonkey link was live between October 21st - November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

### Summary

The findings show widespread changes in provision post 16 years of age, increased family burden, and significant emotional and financial impacts.

**Change of support at age 16:** Over 70% experienced a change in transport when their child turned 16 - including charges, personal budgets, or loss of council transport altogether (13%).

**Reliance on families:** 48% receive council-provided transport and around one-third (33%) rely on family to drive or fund private arrangements.

**Limited financial assistance:** Over half of Personal Transport Budgets don't cover full costs; only 8% receive any government bursary support.

**Educational and emotional impact:** Around 19% report missed education or school changes due to transport; 14% report stress or anxiety for young people.

**Impact on families:** Parents report an impact on work: 20% had to reduce their working hours, 9% had to give up work, 11% could not look for work. 42% report increased stress and 30% financial difficulty.

**Future anxiety:** Nearly 80% of families with younger children (under 16) are already worried about losing transport support at 16.

### Survey questions and responses

#### 1. Is your disabled/SEN young person currently aged 16-19\*?

\*And started their course before they turned 19.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	78%	709
No	22%	201
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>910</b>

709 had children 16-19 years old, 201 were outside this age group – highlighting their transport concerns at question 15.

## 2. How does your young person currently get to school or college?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Council provided bus/minibus/coach	24%	150
Council provided taxi	24%	151
Private taxi arranged by family	3%	17
Driven by family	30%	189
Walks accompanied	0.3%	2
Walks unaccompanied	0.3%	2
Public transport	7%	43
School or college provides transport	2%	11
They are home educated so don't require transport to education	1%	5
They are not in school, college or training	1%	8
Other (please describe their current transport)	9%	60
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>638</b>

**48%** receive council-provided transport (which some have to pay towards), and around a third rely on family arrangements - 30% driven by their family, 3% a family arranged taxi.

## 3. Has there been any change in the transport offered since they turned 16?

Answer Choices	Responses	
No change	29%	184
We now have to pay towards council bus or taxi	27%	172
We now get a Personal Transport Budget to arrange own transport	8%	50
They now get a pass to use public transport	2%	14
Transport has stopped altogether - we get no council support	13%	84
I am now asked to be or provide a travel assistant/escort for my child	1%	7
Not sure as currently appealing (may have interim transport provided)	3%	17
Other (please specify)	17%	111
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>639</b>

Transport remained the same for 29% meaning change at age 16 for around 70% of people: including having to pay for transport, PTB and for 13% transport stopped altogether.

Parent comments under "Other": Cover a range of situations including paying PIP to LA to cover transport, refused due to Motability car, increased costs, LA charges unaffordable.

*"We now get paid 0.45p per mile to take her ourselves so have had cut my hours at work, losing more than they pay in mileage."*

*"I work full time and have another child and at the moment my life is an absolute stress hell trying to get her to college as she cannot travel on public transport and we cannot afford the council's offer. It's affecting my work, making me late dropping off my youngest and she is often late as well due to having to deal with multiple needs within the family."*

*"We had to get a lawyer and fight for it costing £4000."*

#### 4. If you get Personal Transport Budget is it adequate?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes, it covers the cost of travel	47%	23
It partially covers the cost (more than 50%)	22%	11
No, it barely covers the cost (less than 50%)	31%	15
If you want to tell us how much you have to pay towards your child's transport, please say so here (estimate for a year):		12
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>49</b>

More than half of those receiving a PTB said it does **not** fully meet transport costs.

Comments showed parent carers paying between £300 and £5,700 towards their child's transport (estimate for a year).

#### 5. If your child gets Independent Travel Training (ITT) how well does it work?

Answer Choices	Responses	
N/A - they don't get ITT	74%	447
It has enabled my child to travel independently	2%	12
It is working well, my child is still training	2%	14
It is unsuitable and does not work	15%	88
Not sure	7%	44
If you would like to tell us more about ITT please do so here:		111
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>605</b>

The vast majority do not use ITT. Of the 158 people who do, just over **16%** reported positive results (it has worked or is successfully in progress) and around **55%** of those offered ITT say it is unsuitable.

#### 6. How satisfied are you with your current transport to school or college?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very satisfied	23%	139
Satisfied	21%	129
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15%	93
Dissatisfied	13%	78
Very dissatisfied	22%	136
N/A	6%	37
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>612</b>

Satisfaction levels, when filtered against transport received, show how much families appreciate council provided transport.

For those receiving **council provided vehicle transport** (Q2 Council provided bus/minibus/coach or taxi), overall satisfaction is **72%**.

For those who **don't get council provided transport** (Q2 private taxi arranged by family, driven by family, walk, public transport etc) overall satisfaction is only **18%**.

**7. If you get council support (e.g. bus or taxi, Personal Transport Budget, Independent Travel Training, mileage payment) was this in place for the start of term?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	41%	246
No	17%	102
We don't get any council support with transport	32%	192
Other (please specify)	10%	58
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>598</b>

17% faced starting term without transport arrangements in place.

**8. Do you get any financial help towards school or college transport costs from the government 16-19 bursary?**

*(Vulnerable groups or Discretionary bursary which is funding to help with education-related costs, including transport, if your child meets the eligibility criteria).*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	8%	49
No	52%	318
Haven't heard of it	26%	162
Don't know	4%	23
Other - please tell us about any other bursary, grant or funding help here:	10%	60
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>612</b>

Of the 612 people answering this question only 8% (49) get bursary support. Over 80% don't get any bursary support, they haven't heard about it, or they don't know if they receive this financial support.

Comments from "Other" include: students getting concessionary bus passes, still awaiting response to bursary application, not eligible for bursary.

**9. If you get the government bursary how much of your child's school/college transport costs does it cover?**

Answer Choices	Responses	
All of it	44%	21
Most of it (more than 50%)	8%	4
Part of it (less than 50%)	25%	12
Not sure	23%	11
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>48</b>

Of the small number receiving the bursary around 52% said it covered all or most of their transport costs, with 25% saying less than 50% is covered.

### 10. Did you appeal to get transport after your child turned 16?

Answer Choices	Responses	
No	51%	302
Didn't know I could appeal	10%	61
Yes - the appeal was successful and provided the transport I needed	10%	60
Yes - but the appeal was unsuccessful/did not provide the transport I needed/still waiting	7%	42
Had to go through local authority complaints - successful	3%	15
Had to go through local authority complaints - unsuccessful/still waiting	5%	27
Other (please specify)	14%	80
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>587</b>

51% did not appeal, 13% appealed/went through complaints and were successful, and 12% appealed/went through complaints and were unsuccessful or are still waiting.

Those who selected “Other” reported they could not face appeal, felt there was no point as told out right there is no transport available for 16 year olds, transport charges too much so no point appealing etc.

### 11. Have transport arrangements (or change in transport) had an impact on your young person's education?

Answer Choices	Responses	
No impact on their education	53%	294
They sometimes have to miss school or college	11%	60
They frequently have to miss school or college	4%	22
They do not attend school or college at all	3%	18
We have had to choose a different/less appropriate school or college closer to home	1%	7
They start the day stressed or anxious because of the change in their transport	14%	77
Other	15%	82
If you would like to tell us about the impact of school/college transport on your young person's education please do so here:		156
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>560</b>

Around 19% report an impact on education – missing out on school hours or having to choose a different school or college because of transport. A further 14% say there is emotional distress linked to transport.

Parents comments included:

### **Missed education**

*“They are having to miss time at college every day and they will miss a trip/activities this week because parent carer needs to pick them up early just so they can get back to care for their sibling. They are frequently anxious about the change in routine/loss of transport.”*

*“My son missed the first six weeks of college due to a transport dispute”*

*“We cannot afford transport so will have to leave at end of term”*

*“Unable to attend SEN college placement as 2 buses and over an hour one way, not able to travel alone, no sense of danger... vulnerable, autistic, learning disabilities”*

*“She arrives late and leaves early as I have to supervise a school run for my other child. I can't be in two places at once”*

*“They will have to leave school if appeal unsuccessful when interim transport removed”*

### **Wellbeing & independence**

*“My daughters mental health has been impacted and isn't happy”*

*“It has reduced their independence as previously used school transport taxi”*

*“We currently take our son which has put a huge stress on us as a family emotionally, financially and practically.”*

### **Benefits of transport**

*“We have the most wonderful transport team - driver and PA. My daughter's day starts and ends on a positive note thanks to them. They also take an interest in what my daughter does at school, and sometimes relay information that I might not get because I cannot be at the school gate. They make a hugely POSITIVE impact on her learning.”*

*“Transport has meant that attendance has increased from 20% to 100%. It has made all the difference”.*

*“The provided transport enables my son to attend an appropriate/suitable placement. This has helped him enormously. Also, without the provision of transport, either my husband or self, would be unable to work.”*

## **12. Have transport arrangements (or change in transport) had an impact on your/your partner?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>	
N/A - no change to our transport	24%	138
No impact	9%	49
Yes, one or both partners has had to reduce their working hours	20%	115
Yes, one or both partners has had to stop working	9%	51
One or both partners cannot look for work because we have to transport our child	11%	62

Caused financial difficulties	30%	172
Increased stress	42%	238
If you would like to tell us about the impact of transport on your family please do so here:		147
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>570</b>

Parents report an impact on work: 20% had to reduce their working hours, 9% had to give up work, 11% could not look for work. 42% report increased stress and 30% financial difficulty.

Comments from parents on the impact they feel:

*"I have had to leave my professional job of being a specialist nurse to now claim benefits to be able to transport my daughter to and from school. My mental health has deteriorated and I now need to take anti depressants and have needed counselling."*

*"We now have to pay over £1600 per year for his transport, when it's compulsory for him to be in education. It's not his fault (or ours) that the only appropriate placement is 40 mins drive away and that there's no public transport route."*

*"Our stress levels are through the roof. I am in tears most morning because of the poor transport. I also arrive at work late and upset. I can't carry on like this and am thinking of resigning from a job I love as a result."*

### 13. Young People's Views - What do you think of your school transport?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I like it	39%	200
I don't like it	4%	20
I liked it better before it changed	12%	60
I have friends on transport	6%	31
It can make me feel unhappy/stressed/anxious	15%	77
No comment to make	24%	122
Please tell us more here:	26%	134
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>511</b>

Comments, by and on behalf of young people, include:

*"My Daughter loved going to school by transport when that changed this year it caused her huge distress (resulting in challenging behaviours etc)."*

*"I like the driver and the helper. They make me happy"*

*"Less anxiety and stress, able to process my day, routine, same faces, less or no sensory problems, taxi driver and chaperone know my needs and communication difficulties."*

*"Our daughter misses her 'taxi family'"*

Comments, by and on behalf of young people, continued:

*“I don't understand why the Local Authority would agree to a specialist setting that I have no way of getting to. The EHCP has been a waste of time, effort and public money. I still have no education placement and am now two years behind my peers.”*

*“The taxi driver is a nice man. The staff at transport are nice. The system is extremely stressful ... The young person not being able to choose their favourite college is sad.”*

*“I can't sit down and it is overcrowded and I am often late for college which I get marked absent/down for. I get home really late and sometimes the bus leaves early and I can't get home unless my Mum drives an hour to come and pick me up.”*

*“I like it when its consistent and it doesn't keep changing. It also definitely changed every year and I have to get used to a new TA and driver. This current firm don't let me know when the driver changes, I do not know if they are safe and i am expected to just get in the car. My TA this year isn't friendly, she just sits on her phone and doesn't speak to me. She speaks to the diver but not me.”*

#### 14. Asked survey responders to leave details if young person would like to tell us more.

63 people left their details

#### 15. If your child is a different age, do you want to tell us something about their transport?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes - they are under 16 and I am concerned about what will happen when they turn 16	79%	135
Yes - they are over 19 and we have difficulties with their transport provision	8%	14
Yes – they are school age and we have difficulties with transport	5%	8
No - none of these	8%	13
Tell us more:		90
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>170</b>

This shows strong future anxiety amongst families with disabled children under 16 years with almost 80% already worried about losing transport when their child turns 16.

Comments include:

*“My child currently has taxi transport to school. I fear post 16 education will be impossible for her unless I give up work to take her to and from college as there is no way she could travel independently on a bus or train and we don’t have a post 16 college in our county.”*

*“My son is 14 and currently gets transport to his special school. He is likely to stay there until he’s 18/19 but I’m worried he won’t get transport post-16, despite it being the nearest suitable school for him. His school is a 20 minute drive away, there is no public transport there and he has severe learning difficulties and mobility difficulties so is unable to travel there independently. My other two children walk to their mainstream school, but this clearly isn’t an option for my son with additional needs. I would have to give up work if school transport isn’t provided when he turns 16.”*

*“I have been told Local authority transport will cease when attending SEN Post 16 provision. I also have a 21 SEN dependant - I cannot be in two places at the same time.”*

*“Child has to attend out of county send school due to complex needs, I would have to give up work and go on benefits in order to get them both to school which is a round trip of 2 hours twice a day. There is no part time work that pays minimum wage that would even cover costs for living. This would head our family into poverty.”*

### **Get in touch**

To get in touch about this survey, Contact’s work or home to school transport for disabled children and young people, please email [rachel.dixon@Contact.org.uk](mailto:rachel.dixon@Contact.org.uk)

January 2026