

Home to School Travel Policy Consultation

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Introduction

This report presents the findings of the consultation on the Home to School Policy Consultation.

The online survey was hosted on the Hackney Council consultation web pages and was open from 26 February to 17 May 2024. Due to the survey being launched just before the Pre- election period from 19 March till 2 May, further promotion of the consultation could not be done. Because of this, the consultation was extended by 3 weeks to allow further promotion and potentially increase the response rate.

It was promoted in Love Hackney, the Council's local magazine and promoted on the Hackney Local Offer web page. In total, 91 completed responses were received.

An Easy Read survey was developed by the headteacher of Ickburgh school to provide pupils with SEN an alternative way to participate. A total of 29 completed Easy Read surveys were received.

Background

In summer 2023, the Department for Education published new guidance that tells councils what they must do by law and what they should do to develop good practice in home-to-school travel. Following this, Hackney Council developed a new home to school travel policy for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The purpose of the consultation was to provide residents an opportunity to shape a statutorily compliant travel assistance policy based on the following:

- Bringing our current policies into one place – there are policies for young people with SEND, both of compulsory school age, of pre-school age and for those aged over 16; and for young people without SEND, of compulsory school age and over 16 years.

and in doing that, in a readable form, makes it easier to understand.

- Talk about home to school travel more than transport to help a shift towards more independent forms of travel, away from school buses and taxis where this is possible.

and in doing that, shifts the focus to independent travel and sustainability.

It was not consulting on reducing SEND travel, such as removing eligibility for home to school travel for young people aged 16 or over or introducing charges for travel. If adopted, the home to school offer, especially in relation to children & young people with EHC Plans, would promote independence through an independent travel training programme and where appropriate personal travel budgets. Families will be supported to access the travel training programme.

Consultation & Engagement Approach

A consultation and engagement plan was developed by an officer in the consultation and engagement team. In addition, a communications plan was developed to ensure the consultation was promoted effectively.

Channels (online/social media)

- Consultation webpage launch promoted on Hackney Council's X and Facebook account
- Consultation webpage launch promoted on Hackney Council's Local Offer web page
- Consultation promoted in Hackney e-newsletter and Love Hackney magazine, and staff internal newsletter
- Posts on Hackney Council's X and Facebook
- E-newsletters (external and internal staff newsletters)

Email

- Other newsletters / mailings inviting participants to the consultation and focus groups such as Carers Centre / SEND Parent Carer Forum
- Hackney News (newsletter)
- Young Hackney (newsletter)

Easy Read survey

An Easy Read version of the online survey was created to allow participation by pupils with SEN who may have found the online survey difficult to use. This was available in print. This allowed participation by Ickburgh school.

Online and in person engagement

In addition to the survey, people were invited to actively participate in the consultation and action planning by attending online focus groups, which were promoted alongside the survey.

3 online workshops were held and attended by a total of 25 people, with a further 5 email/phone conversations.

These sessions allowed deeper engagement on elements regarding the draft policy and the proposed outcomes of its implementation. This resulted in making edits to the proposed policy , and having more concrete or practical suggestions on actions to undertake to achieve proposed outcomes.

Response rate

There were a total of 91 respondents to the online consultation. The respondents were made up of parents/carers, teachers and interested members of the public. No students took part in the online consultation but pupils at Ickburgh school responded to an easy read questionnaire that was created.

Executive summary

Introduction

This is a summary report on the consultation on home to school travel in Hackney that took place between 26 February and 17 May 2024. An online questionnaire asked questions of fact and opinion on a number of aspects of home to school travel, with space for 'free text' written responses. These are the headline results.

Responses

There were 91 responses.

- 82% were female.
- 51% were 'interested members of the public'.
- 40% were 'parents/carers'.
- 6% were from 'schools' (2 from special schools, 3 from mainstream schools).

Of the parents/carers group, 57% had children who were users of transport. 90% had EHCPs.

Home to school travel

The consultation paper talked about some of the basic principles of home to school travel. These were turned into questions in the questionnaire-

Do you agree or disagree with the following:

Home to school travel only happens at the beginning and the end of the school day:

Agree 44% Disagree 54%

Parents may be expected to accompany their child to and from school, if they live close by:

Agree 30% Disagree 65%

Where possible, get children to a pickup point, rather than be collected from the house:

Agree 18% Disagree 76%

A Passenger Assistant is there only because of the needs of the child, not as a rule:

Agree 36% Disagree 48%

A young person's travel needs should be regularly reviewed:

Agree 60% Disagree 30%.

3. Independent Travel Training

We wanted to find out people's perceptions of the benefits of and barriers to the uptake of independent travel training for young people.

We asked, do you agree or disagree that:

Travelling independently is an important life skill for a young person to attain if they can:

Agree 76% Disagree 14%

Travel training can improve self-esteem and confidence:

Agree 64% Disagree 18%

Travel training can provide more opportunities for young people:

Agree 62% Disagree 29%.

And - Do you agree or disagree that:

Particular SEND needs cannot be supported on public transport:

Agree 85% Disagree 10%

Some people may have a limited awareness of danger/ at risk using public transport:

Agree 97% Disagree 2%

Public transport links may not be good enough...:

Agree 91% Disagree 29%.

Personal Travel budgets

Similarly, we wanted to find out about people's perceptions of the benefits of and barriers to the uptake of personal travel budgets.

We asked - Do you agree or disagree that Personal Travel Budgets:

Allow control over travel arrangements:

Agree 44% Disagree 34%

Offer the ability to arrange travel around family commitments:

Agree 43% Disagree 34%

Decrease journey times for young people:

Agree 25% Disagree 34%.

And - Do you agree or disagree that:

The value of the Personal Travel Budget is too low:

Agree 54% Disagree 5%

Family and work commitments may make Personal Travel Budgets unattractive to many people:

Agree 43% Disagree 11%

The distance between home and school may be too great:

Agree 63% Disagree 10%.

Discretionary travel support

We asked questions about areas of travel assistance where the Council had a choice whether to provide it for some groups or not.

Under 5s with SEND

We asked - Do you agree or disagree with the following:

The Council should

Continue to provide support to children under 5 years with SEND:

Agree 73% Disagree 15%

Provide support to children under 5 years with SEND where necessary:

Agree 57% Disagree 36%

Cease to provide support to children under 5 years with SEND:

Agree 12% Disagree 81%.

16-18-year-olds

We asked - Do you agree or disagree with the following:

The Council should

Continue to provide travel support to students aged 16-18 years of age:

Agree 90% Disagree 9%

Provide travel support to students aged 16-18 years of age where necessary:

Agree 49% Disagree 40%

Cease to provide travel support to students aged 16-18 years of age

Agree 10% Disagree 88%.

19-25-year-olds/adult learners with EHCPs

We asked - Do you agree or disagree with the following:

The Council should

Continue to provide travel support for adult learners with EHCPs aged 19-25:

Agree 90% Disagree 9%

Provide travel support for adult learners with EHCPs aged 19-25 where necessary:

Agree 49% Disagree 40%

Cease to provide travel support for adult learners with EHCPs aged 19-25 :

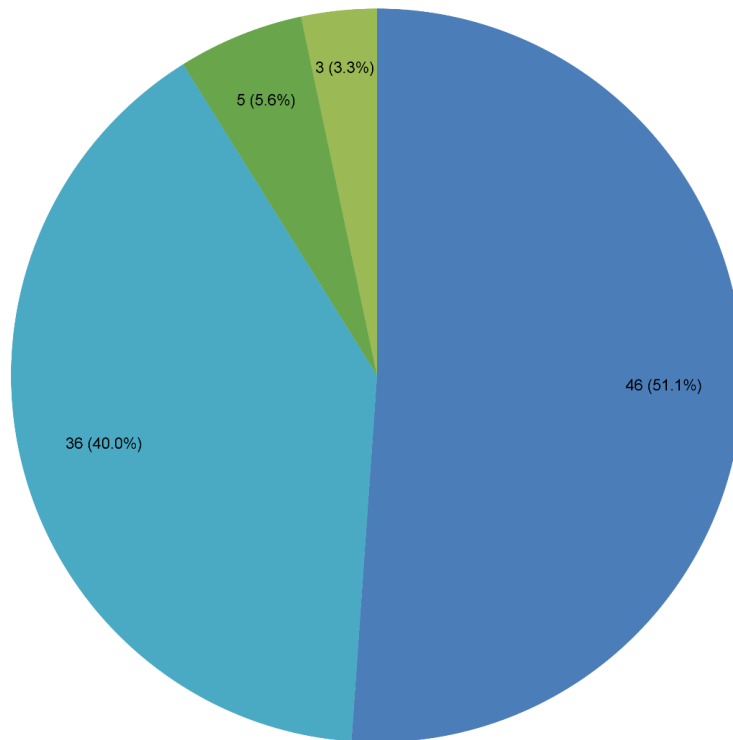
Agree 10% Disagree 88%.

Overview of results

Survey responses (Quantitative)

Question 1: Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

There were 90 responses to this question.

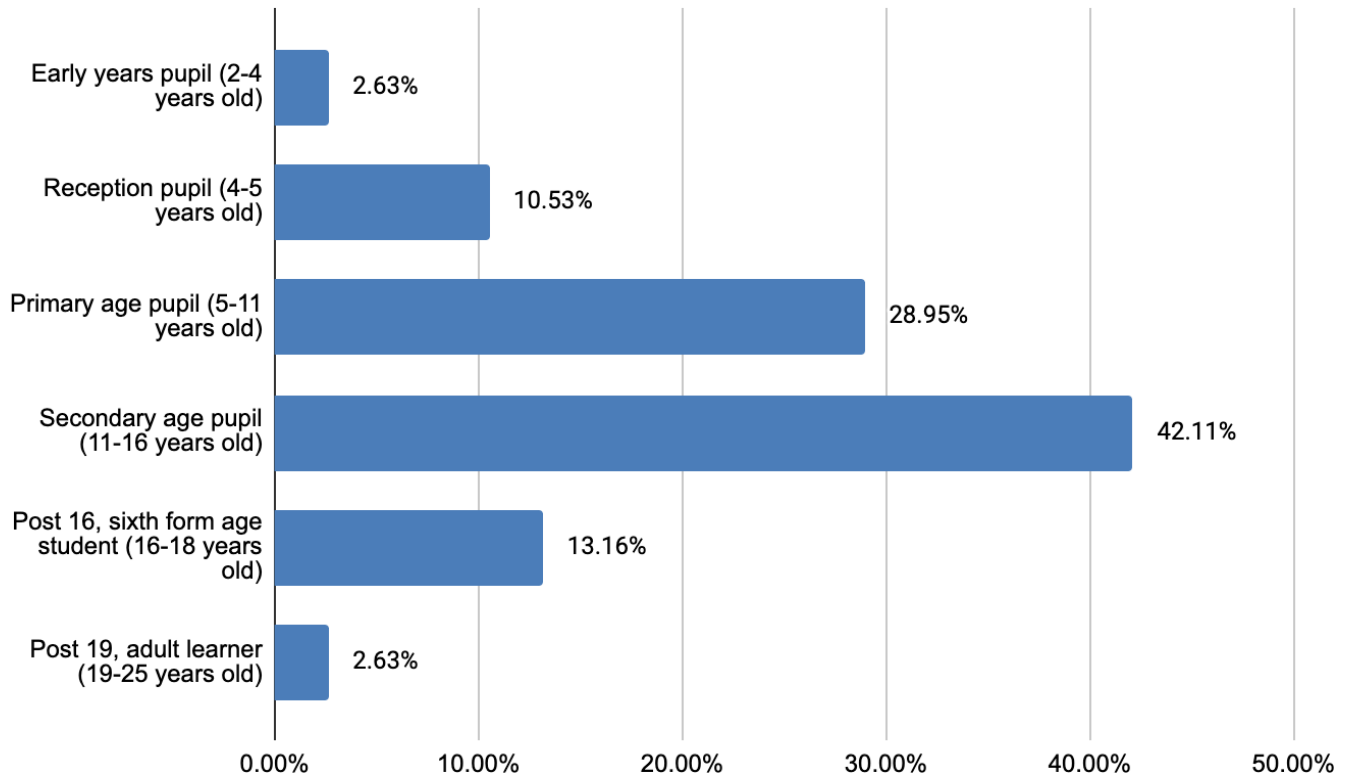


- I am an interested member of the public
- I am a parent or carer of a child or young person with SEND
- I am a member of staff working in or with a school (i.e. school staff or governor)
- Other

Respondents were asked to describe their interest in this consultation. 46 (51.11%) respondents identified as interested members of the public, 36 (40.00%) respondents were parents or carers of a child or young person with SEND, and 5 (5.56%) respondents were school staff or governors. Additionally, 3 (3.33%) respondents selected "Other," whilst no respondents identified as pupils, students, or home to school transport providers.

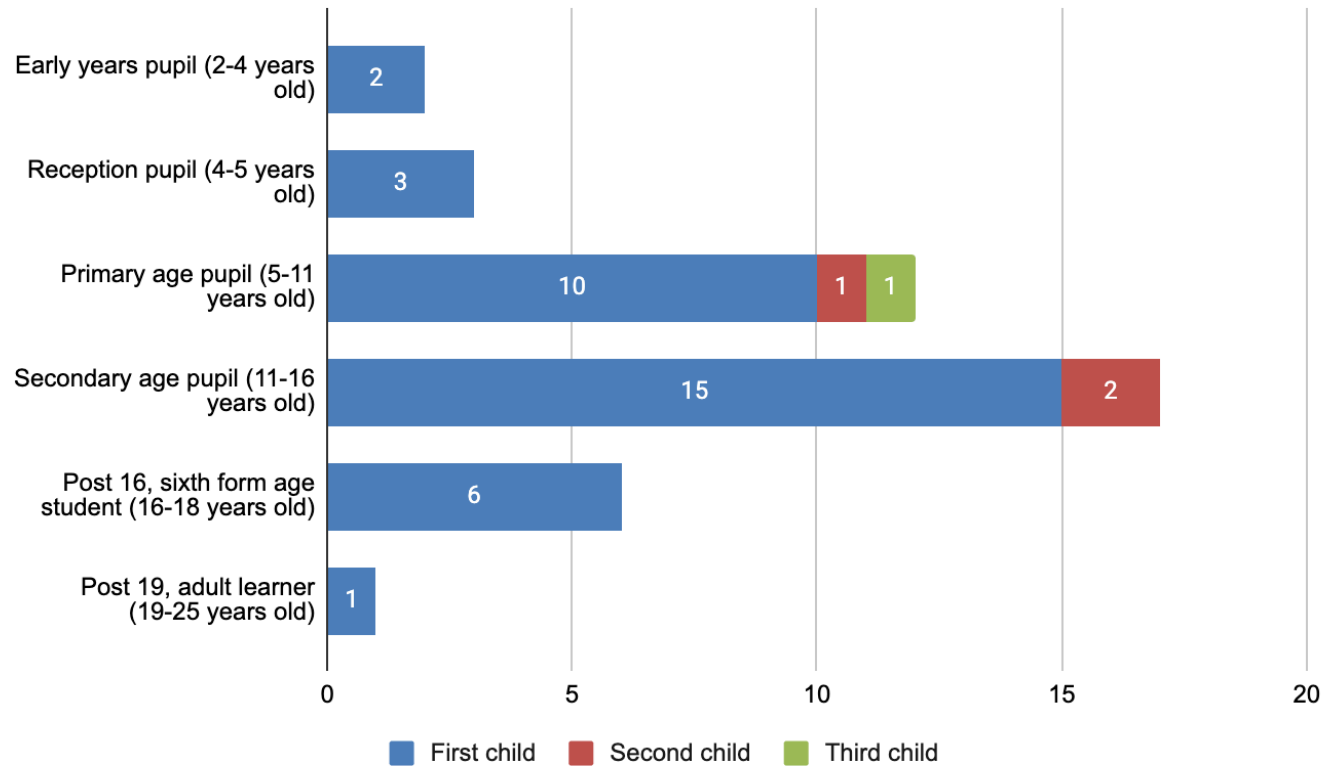
Question 2: If your child uses / is eligible for home to school travel services, what is the age of your child or children? (Tick all that apply)

There were 38 responses to this question.



Respondents were asked the age of their child or children using or eligible for home to school travel services. 16 (42.11%) indicated they had secondary age pupils (11-16 years old), 11 (28.95%) had primary age pupils (5-11 years old), and 5 (13.16%) had post-16, sixth form age students (16-18 years old). Additionally, 4 (10.53%) had reception pupils (4-5 years old), 1 (2.63%) had early years pupils (2-4 years old), and 1 (2.63%) had post-19, adult learners (19-25 years old).

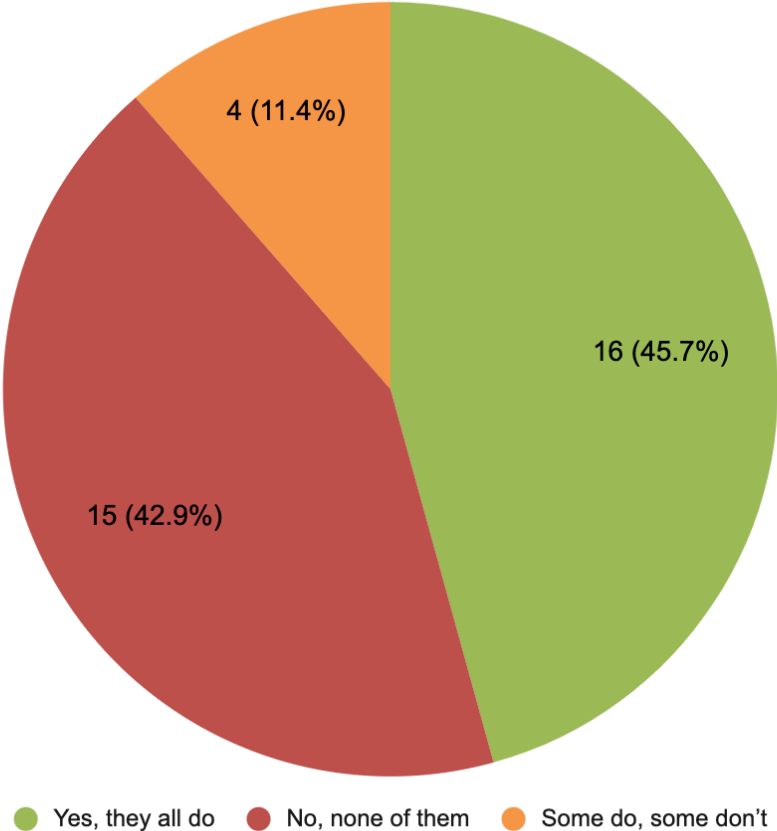
Please tell us the number of children in the age group(s) that you selected above:



Respondents were asked to indicate the number of children they have in each selected age group. 35 respondents answered one or more parts of this question. Among the first children, there were 2 early years pupils (2-4 years old), 3 reception pupils (4-5 years old), 10 primary age pupils (5-11 years old), 15 secondary age pupils (11-16 years old), 6 post-16, sixth form age students (16-18 years old), and 1 post-19, adult learner (19-25 years old). Among the second children, there was 1 primary age pupil (5-11 years old) and 2 secondary age pupils (11-16 years old). Among the third children, there was 1 primary age pupil (5-11 years old).

Question 3: Do your children use home to school travel services that are organised by Hackney Council to get to and from school?

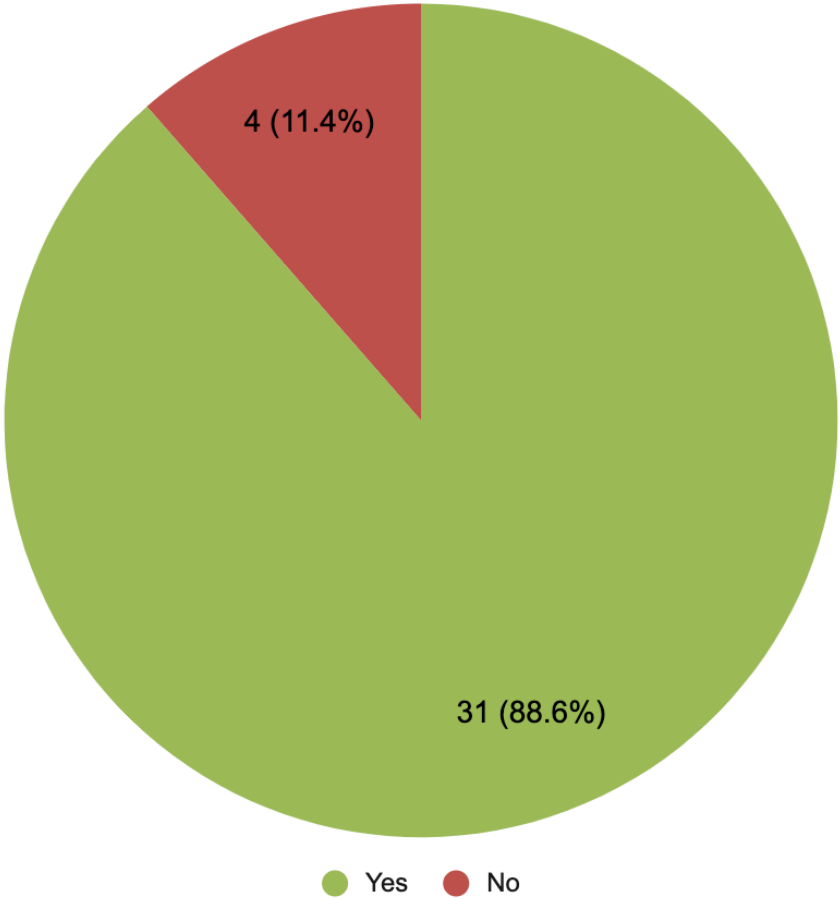
There were 35 responses to this question.



Respondents were asked if their children use home to school travel services organised by Hackney Council. 16 (45.71%) responded "Yes, they all do," 15 (42.86%) responded "No, none of them," and 4 (11.43%) responded "Some do, some don't."

Question 4: Do any of your children have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP)?

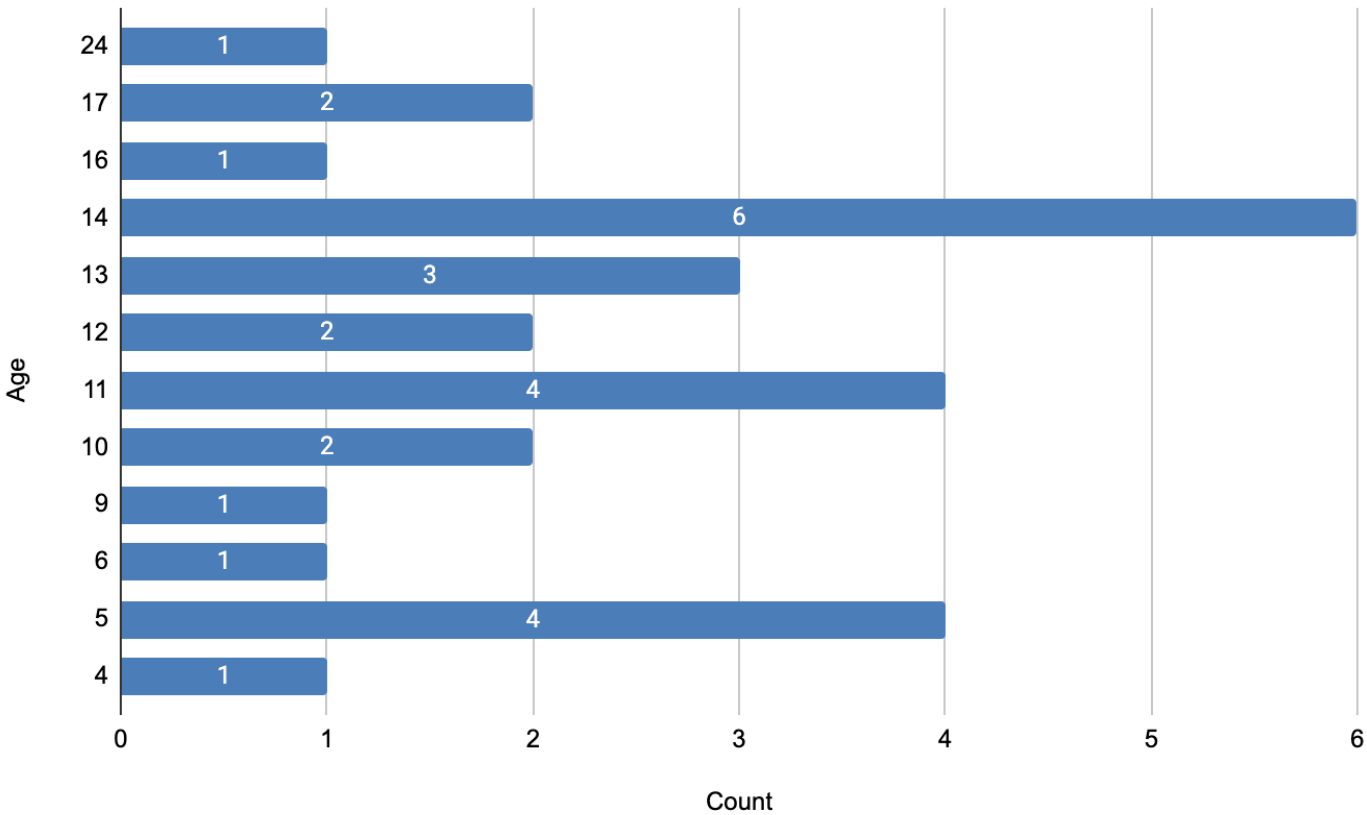
There were 35 responses to this question.



Respondents were asked if any of their children have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). 31 (88.57%) responded "Yes," and 4 (11.43%) responded "No."

If yes, please provide ages of those children:

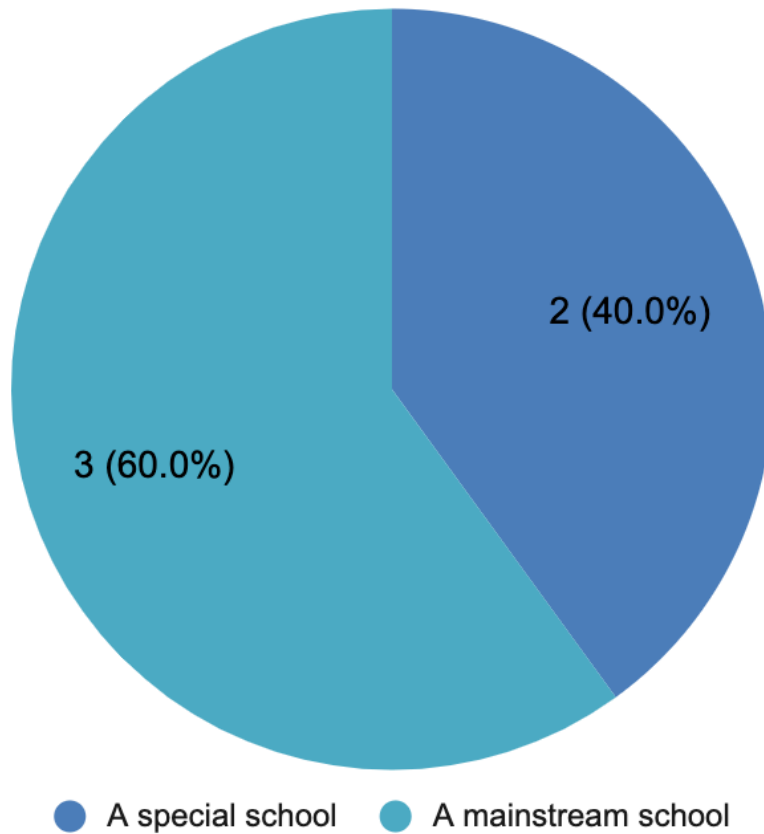
There were 28 responses to this question.



Respondents were asked to provide the ages of their children with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). The ages and counts were as follows: age 24 (1 child), age 17 (2 children), age 16 (1 child), age 14 (6 children), age 13 (3 children), age 12 (2 children), age 11 (4 children), age 10 (2 children), age 9 (1 child), age 6 (1 child), age 5 (4 children), and age 4 (1 child).

Question 11: Are you from one of the following?

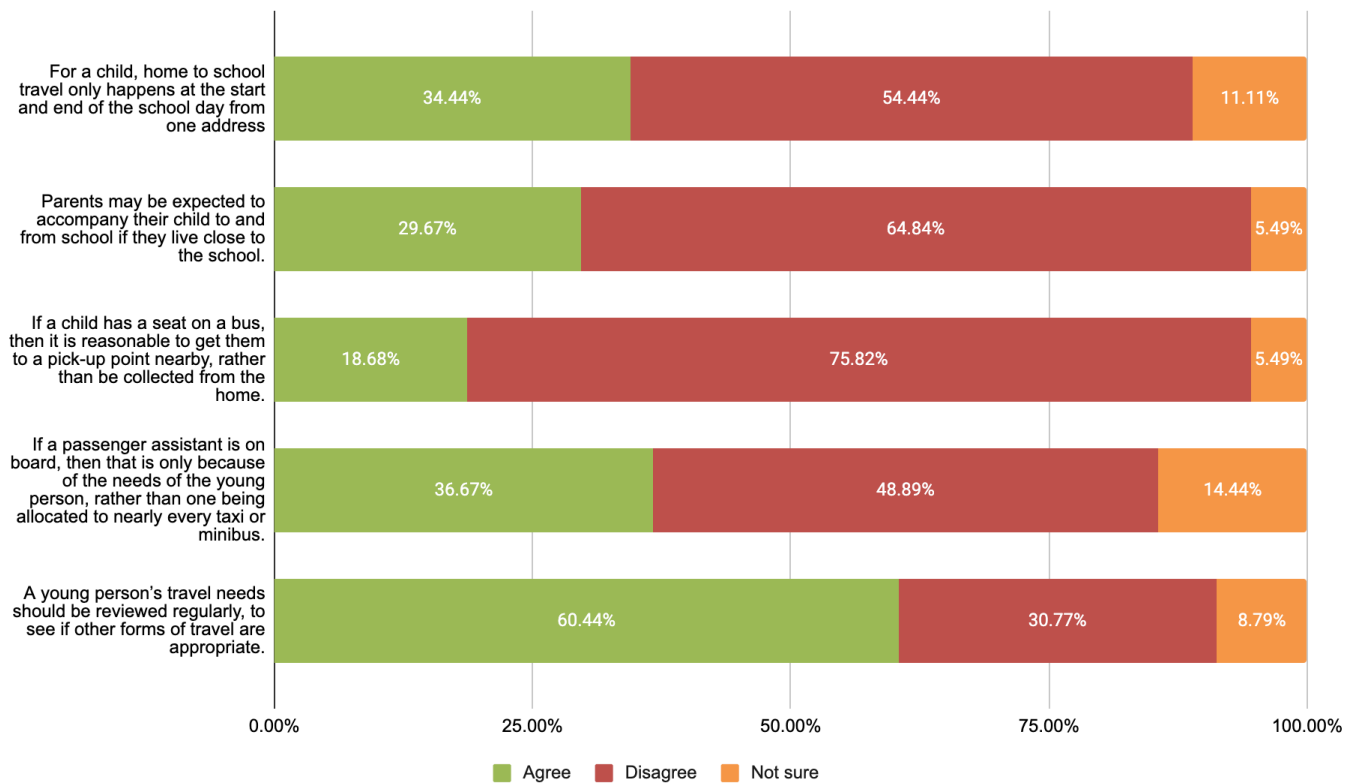
There were 5 responses to this question.



Respondents were asked if they were from a special school, mainstream school, college, independent special school or college, or other. 2 (40%) responded being from a special school and 3 (60%) from a mainstream school.

Question 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about home to school travel:

There were 91 responses to this question, however, not every statement was answered by all respondents.



Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with various statements about home to school travel.

For the statement "For a child, home to school travel only happens at the start and end of the school day from one address," 34.44% (31) agreed and 54.44% (49) disagreed, with 11.11% (10) not sure.

Regarding "Parents may be expected to accompany their child to and from school if they live close to the school," 29.67% (27) agreed and 64.83% (59) disagreed, with 5.49% (5) not sure.

For "If a child has a seat on a bus, then it is reasonable to get them to a pick-up point nearby, rather than be collected from the home," 18.68% (17) agreed and 75.82% (69) disagreed, with 5.49% (5) not sure.

With the statement "If a passenger assistant is on board, then that is only because of the needs of the young person, rather than one being allocated to nearly every taxi or minibus," 36.66% (33) agreed and 48.88% (44) disagreed, with 14.44% (13) not sure.

Lastly, for "A young person's travel needs should be reviewed regularly, to see if other forms of travel are appropriate," 60.44% (55) agreed and 30.76% (28) disagreed, with 8.79% (8) not sure.

Question 15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about independent travel training:

There were 91 responses to this question.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with statements about independent travel training.

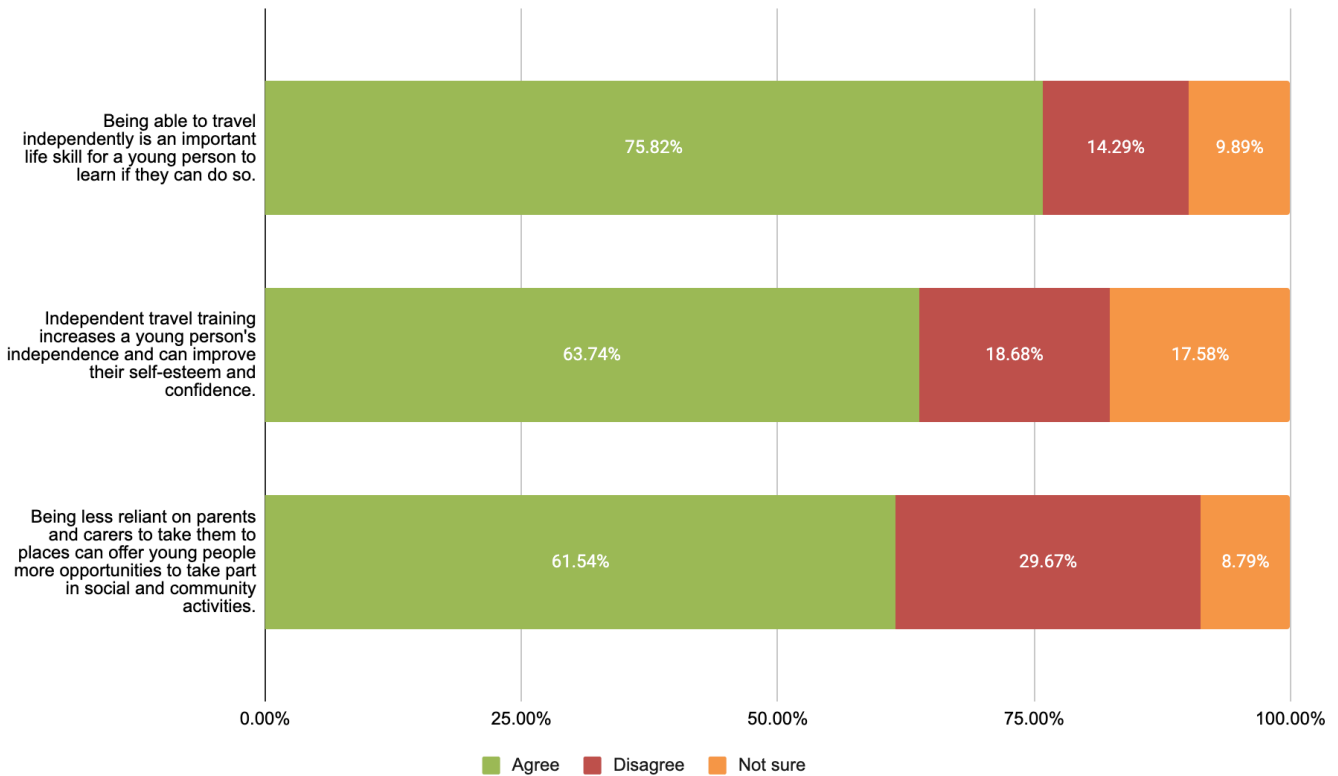
For the statement "Being able to travel independently is an important life skill for a young person to learn if they can do so," 75.82% (69) agreed, 14.29% (13) disagreed, and 9.89% (9) were not sure.

Regarding "Independent travel training increases a young person's independence and can improve their self-esteem and confidence," 63.74% (58) agreed, 18.68% (17) disagreed, and 17.58% (16) were not sure.

For the statement "Being less reliant on parents and carers to take them to places can offer young people more opportunities to take part in social and community activities," 61.54% (56) agreed, 29.67% (27) disagreed, and 8.79% (8) were not sure.

Question 16: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on independent travel training:

There were 91 responses to this question.



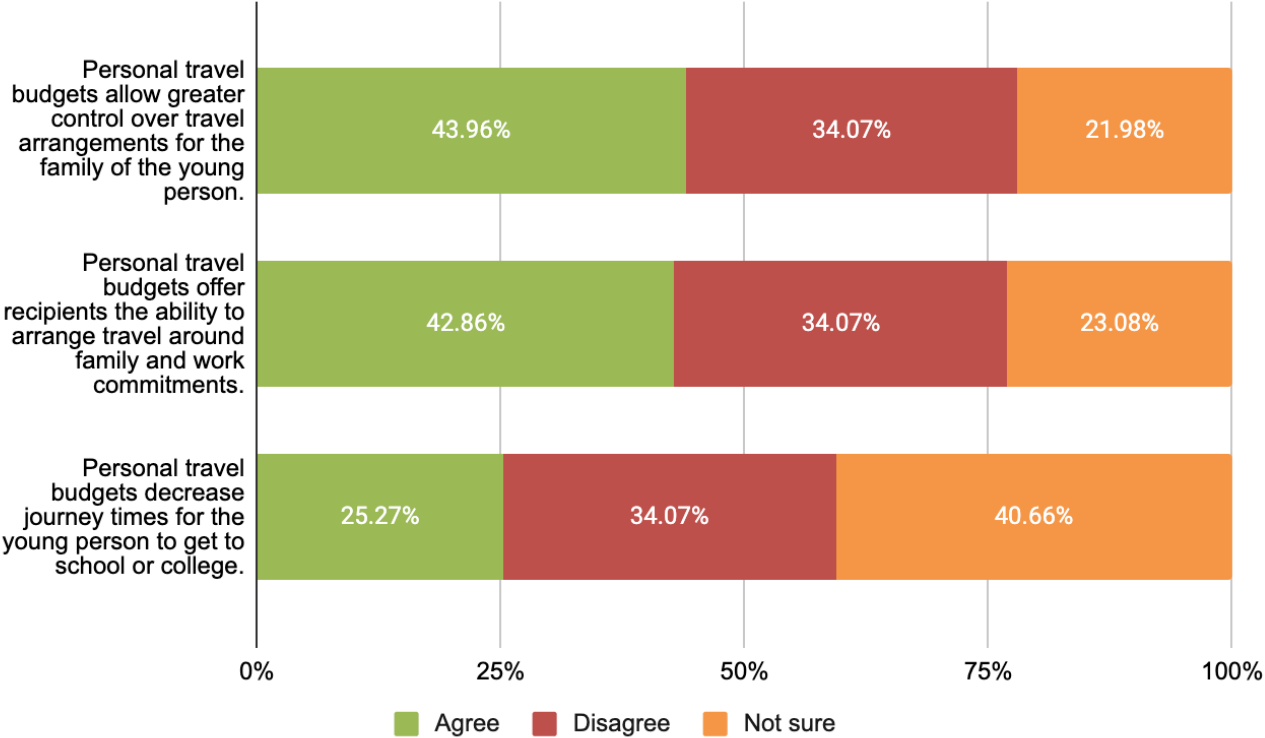
For the statement "Some young people's special educational needs or disabilities may not be supported on public transport," 85.71% (78) agreed, 10.99% (10) disagreed, and 3.30% (3) were not sure.

Regarding "Some young people may have a limited awareness of danger and may be at risk when using public transport," 97.80% (89) agreed, 2.20% (2) disagreed, and no respondents were unsure.

For the statement "Public transport links are not always good enough to enable young people to get to their place of education," 91.21% (83) agreed, 7.69% (7) disagreed, and 1.10% (1) were not sure.

Question 18: From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about personal travel budgets:

There were 91 responses to this question.



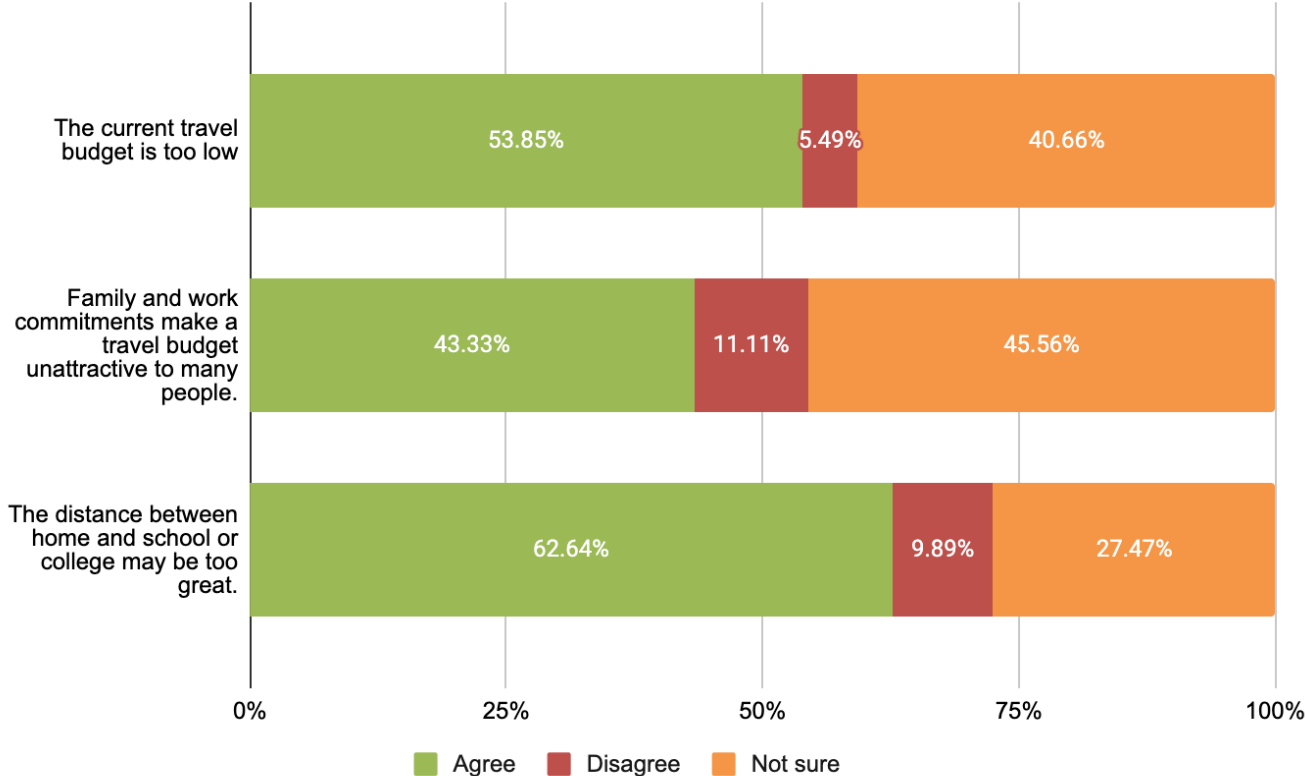
For the statement "Personal travel budgets allow greater control over travel arrangements for the family of the young person," 43.96% (40) agreed, 34.07% (31) disagreed, and 21.98% (20) were not sure.

Regarding "Personal travel budgets offer recipients the ability to arrange travel around family and work commitments," 42.86% (39) agreed, 34.07% (31) disagreed, and 23.08% (21) were not sure.

For the statement "Personal travel budgets decrease journey times for the young person to get to school or college," 25.27% (23) agreed, 34.07% (31) disagreed, and 40.66% (37) were not sure.

Question 19: From what you know, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about personal travel budgets:

There were 91 responses to this question, however, not every statement was answered by all respondents.



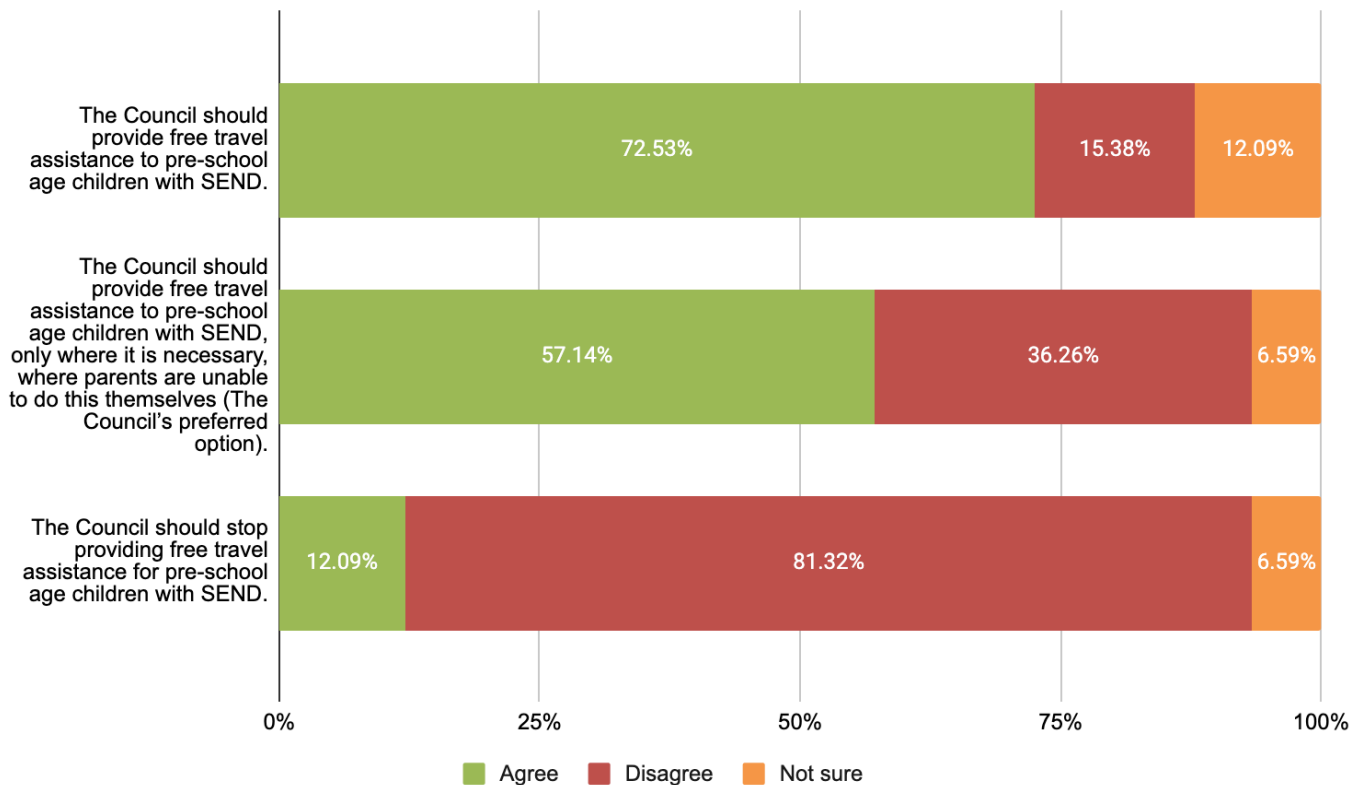
For the statement "The current travel budget is too low," 53.85% (49) agreed, 5.49% (5) disagreed, and 40.66% (37) were not sure.

Regarding "Family and work commitments make a travel budget unattractive to many people," 43.33% (39) agreed, 11.11% (10) disagreed, and 45.56% (41) were not sure.

For the statement "The distance between home and school or college may be too great," 62.64% (57) agreed, 9.89% (9) disagreed, and 27.47% (25) were not sure.

Question 21: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about discretionary travel support for pre-school age children with SEND:

There were 91 responses to this question.



For the statement "The Council should provide free travel assistance to pre-school age children with SEND," 72.53% (66) agreed, 15.38% (14) disagreed, and 12.09% (11) were not sure.

Regarding "The Council should provide free travel assistance to pre-school age children with SEND, only where it is necessary, where parents are unable to do this themselves (The Council's preferred option)," 57.14% (52) agreed, 36.26% (33) disagreed, and 6.59% (6) were not sure.

For the statement "The Council should stop providing free travel assistance for pre-school age children with SEND," 12.09% (11) agreed, 81.32% (74) disagreed, and 6.59% (6) were not sure.

Question 23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about discretionary travel support for students aged 16-18 years with SEND:

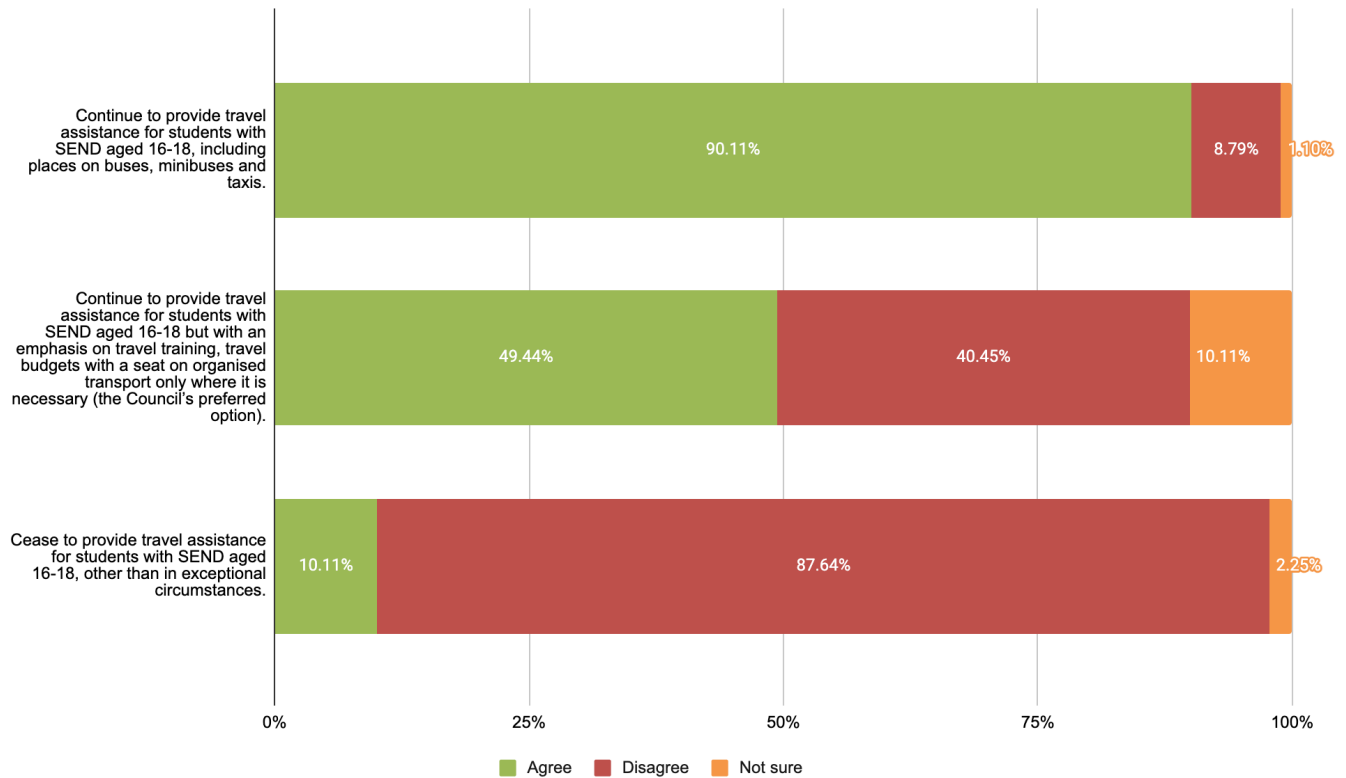
There were 91 responses to this question, however, not every statement was answered by all respondents.

For the statement "Continue to provide travel assistance for students with SEND aged 16-18, including places on buses, minibuses and taxis," 90.11% (82) agreed, 8.79% (8) disagreed, and 1.10% (1) were not sure.

Regarding "Continue to provide travel assistance for students with SEND aged 16-18 but with an emphasis on travel training, travel budgets with a seat on organised transport only where it is necessary (the Council's preferred option)," 49.44% (44) agreed, 40.45% (36) disagreed, and 10.11% (9) were not sure.

For the statement "Cease to provide travel assistance for students with SEND aged 16-18, other than in exceptional circumstances," 10.11% (9) agreed, 87.64% (78) disagreed, and 2.25% (2) were not sure.

Question 25: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about discretionary travel support for students aged 16-18 years with SEND:

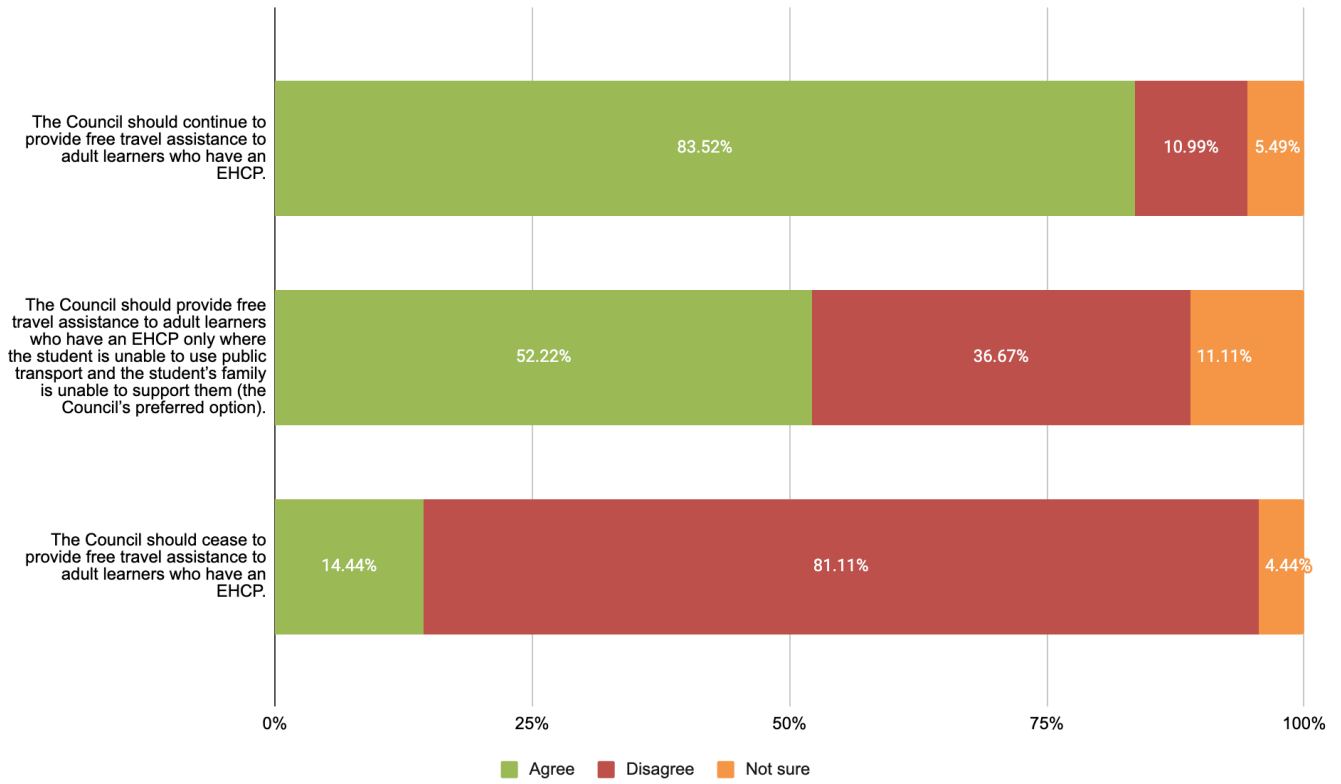


There were 91 responses to this question, however, not every statement was answered by all respondents.

For the statement "The Council should continue to provide free travel assistance to adult learners who have an EHCP," 83.52% (76) agreed, 10.99% (10) disagreed, and 5.49% (5) were not sure.

Regarding "The Council should provide free travel assistance to adult learners who have an EHCP only where the student is unable to use public transport and the student's family is unable to support them (the Council's preferred option)," 52.22% (47) agreed, 36.67% (33) disagreed, and 11.11% (10) were not sure.

For the statement "The Council should cease to provide free travel assistance to adult learners who have an EHCP," 14.44% (13) agreed, 81.11% (73) disagreed, and 4.44% (4) were not sure.



Survey responses (Qualitative)

Question 5: Do you have any feedback you would like to share on your experiences of the home to school travel service in Hackney?

There were 24 written responses to this question.

“The experience is positive”. Half (12) made positive comments, in relation both to the school buses and the taxi services. Here’s some more examples:

“Hackney transport home to school services are invaluable. I would be lost without this support. The most suitable education setting for my child is out of borough and their journey would be impossible for them without travel services”.

“Having transport has really made a significant difference in my child’s life. Getting to and from school in a very safe way. Which means she has a better-quality time to focus and enjoy learning”.

“The travel service is vital for us to function as a family – my son’s driver and assistant are the best! We couldn’t work without this service”.

“The service is excellent. The staff are both efficient and punctual but also warm and engaging”.

Of the five negative responses, two concerned the level of travel provision. One expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of travel support for a post 19 residential placement. The second was concerned both with the working of the personal budget scheme and the refusal of the service to grant one. The third was a comment about the service overall;

“The service is very unreliable. Never thinks of the family as a whole. Especially a single mum with more than one child. Trying to coordinate multiple school drop offs and pick-ups let alone work....It’s run by staff who are rude and will say they’re going to call back but never do.”

The fourth expressed dissatisfaction with the service from a taxi operator, including the escort on the vehicle - “.. she doesn’t pay attention to us, always on the phone” and that they heard nothing from the transport service in response to their complaint. The fifth commented on the amount of time children have to wait before getting off the bus at one of the special schools and that it can be distressing for them.

Two made comments on personal travel budgets. One, that they valued it as it gave them family time with their child. The second, that they would like one but did not qualify for one.

Of the three 'Other' comments, two said their children could not do travel training. The third asked for a school safety zone and a cycle lane around Hackney New Primary school so their autistic son could cycle there.

Question 12: Do you have any feedback you would like to share on your experiences of the home to school travel service in Hackney?

There were four unrelated responses to this question.

These were:

“Students in year 10 and 11, especially those with EHCPS often need travel training to take them through the next steps towards independence.”

“Parents with SEN children need more support to get them to school.”

“In our experience, parents/carers have had a range of challenges with home to school travel service including but not limited to: understanding eligibility/criteria, needing to appeal when the case appears clear cut, a need for greater communication/clarity, a clearer grasp of the challenges facing families of young people with SEND”.

“More children and families need support with the transport”.

Q14. Do you have any other comments on getting to and from school?

There were 44 individual responses to the 'getting to and from school' propositions, some making more than one point. Many replies were critical, suggesting that the Council was not recognising the needs of children with special educational needs when it put forward these statements in the questionnaire. Most comments related to the importance of the needs of the child and for an understanding of what it was like to use home to school travel and transport:

“There are so many variables in a journey. Priority should be young people arriving at school calm and ready to learn and the best way to guarantee this is consistent, predictable travel and for many that will need to be provided. And

where independent travel is possible then consistent and detailed support should be in place for that too”.

“Children with SEN experience additional challenges and I believe too many rules and restrictions on school travel don’t benefit their living conditions. Children without SEN can attend any school in their catchment area, whereas many SEND kids have to travel long and far to receive an education. The state and the council has a duty of care to make transitions and every day navigating as smooth as possible for the families in need. More often than not, there isn’t an alternative school choice and the burden should not fall on their families who already have enough struggles”.

The needs of children should be assessed individually:

“Transport to and from school should be considered case by case and be child and family centric. It should always be informed by, and meet, the specific needs of the individual child and the circumstances of that child's family. There is no one size fits all”.

There were six references to home to school travel needing to take account of family circumstances:

“ When you have a child who needs a mobility aid or autism, asking them to wait at a pickup point can be traumatic, especially in the rain when taxis can be picking up in a 45 minute window which is the reality. If a parent has other young children, then they have to wait there too which is ridiculous. Also these questions aren’t considering divorced parents at all. This is all about budget cuts with not at all putting the children first. If a child has divorced parents who live separately, transport should collect and drop from both homes.”

Budget cuts were mentioned by a number of respondents. For example:

“If you have a child with SEN, you are already coming up against multiple challenges. Getting a dysregulated, sensory child to school is a huge strain, without transport you are fundamentally putting a good proportion of these children at risk by denying them safe, aided transport from their home address. Ultimately failing vulnerable children and putting lives at risk which is unethical and dangerous. It is a dereliction of duty to fail families who need your help. SEN transport is not an area you should be looking to make cuts. It is immoral”.

There were 5 references to passenger assistants, including:

“Passenger assistance should be available due to unpredictable nature of disability. It could be dangerous for drivers otherwise. Drivers should have understanding about hidden disability and dysregulated behaviour as a basic part of contract. Reasonable adjustments for vulnerable disabled children should always be available”.

On pick-up points, there were 5 references to this too. For example:

“Children have neurological disabilities which cause safeguarding issues on walks to and from pick up points or small journeys. A car protects them from further distress.”

“Being picked up from a safe and convenient point for the parent is very important. Things don’t always go perfectly and it can be hard to distract. It is important children are picked up as close to home as possible.

On the role of parents, one respondent said:

“Parents must be reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure that their child attends school”.

Two other respondents asked why some children with SEN used public transport, sometimes undertaking difficult journeys.

A couple of parents pointed out that their children would travel independently if they could, but their needs meant that they could not.

There was some agreement that young people’s travel needs should be reviewed during their school career, but a number of respondents said that the concept of review was ‘vague’ and were suspicious that reviewing was a way of cutting costs

Overall, the proposals in the questionnaire were seen by some as the Council trying to shift the onus onto parents:

“I think it's astounding to suggest not having a passenger assistant on board every vehicle. This should be a bare minimum for children with enhanced needs. A parent should not be required to be on the provided transport - as the council is providing transport it should also be providing support staff for that transport. It is not the job of parents who will work/have other children. The whole point of providing transport for kids with enhanced needs is because they are not *able* to use traditional means of transport or have the required ability to keep themselves safe, it is not a choice. It is fully the duty of the Council to ensure their safety at all times. Getting them to meeting points, trying to remove support staff and shift the bulk of the responsibility onto parents who

already have to fight for assistance and undertake significantly larger workloads and financial burdens for children with specific needs is outrageous”.

Question 17: Do you have any other comments on independent travel training?

There were 41 responses to this question.

The majority of comments (25) were around travel training not being appropriate for many young people who have SEND.

Typical replies were:

“ It’s very hard to do training with SEND children to travel to and from school using public transport because of a lack of understanding when buses are using a different route or train delays. It’s too hard to break routines and this will put them in danger of getting lost or more serious accidents”

“Independent travel training is of course what should be aimed for but not at the cost of the child’s safety and wellbeing. Public transport is not equipped to support some autistic people”

”If a parent thought their child could be travel trained, then they’d 100% be doing it themselves with absolute enthusiasm. No parent wants their child to have transport to and from school”.

There were around ten comments that either supported or saw a case for independent travel training:

“I think this is a gap in the current Hackney SEND offer and have known many young people who would benefit from this support”.

“It is very difficult for a SEND child to travel independently and that is why parents apply for [transport]. I would like to see 16 years plus to be offered travel support and not forced on the independent travel training”

“Travel training and independent travel is amazing, but it is not appropriate for all young people at all points and it needs to be at the right time and for the right journey”.

There were a similar number of comments about the need for consent for the young person and the parent, that travel training should not be forced on people. Assessment was also important, typically:

“ It depends on each individual’s needs if they should learn to travel independently; however, there should be an assessment beforehand to understand if the young persons are aware of risks and danger. I for one at this moment would never feel comfortable my young child can be out travelling on their own”.

Seven respondents expressed concerns about the safety and quality of public transport whilst five respondents felt that travel training was being introduced to save money.

Question 20. Do you have any other comments on personal travel budgets?

There were 24 responses, some making more than one comment.

The most frequent comments (9) were around the operation of the personal budget scheme and in particular, the level of funding currently.

For one respondent, simply “the personal budget is too low” especially when compared with the current [cost of living] crisis. Another said it was difficult to get the appropriate level of support and assistance under the scheme; a third that they were unlikely to cover the same level of service (door to door service and accessible vehicles) as the current taxi service does; two others that the support was not sufficient.

For another respondent:

“I know of people who have the cost of a taxi covered. What doesn’t make sense is that it doesn’t cover the cost of the parent/carer to return home afterwards”.

One respondent felt that the budgets should be “paid up front allowing the best form to be used”, whilst one person said that personal travel budgets “should be seen as a contribution to getting to school so not necessarily covering all the costs.” There were two comments that personal budgets of any kind were open to mismanagement. A couple said that this was about saving money. One suggested “buy the kids a bike”.

There were 6 comments around the theme that family circumstances did not allow for the take up of a travel budget:

“what about parents with multiple children at different schools and with an SEND child?..”

“It impacts on jobs and other responsibilities.. for example, where there’s more than one child”.

A couple of respondents commented on the distance between home and school:

“My child has to travel out of the borough to find a suitable placement. We are reliant on the travel service not only to free me up for work or study but also because the public transport route would be very long, exhausting and extremely stressful for my child”

A number of respondents talked about the additional burden a travel budget could place on families :“looking after a disabled child, or children, is a full time job without adding further admin and worry” was a typical response.

A lot depended on individual children and individual circumstances. “Travel budgets cannot be ‘one size fits all’ and need to be flexible according to the child and family’s needs.. there has to be room for emergencies, e.g. being able to afford a cab if the train is cancelled... Travel budgets do not absolve the council from offering.. other support.”

Question 22 Do you have any other comments on travel support for pre-school age children with SEND? - comments

There were 19 responses.

Most comments related to the needs of children involved, the needs of their families and hence the need for support with transport and travel.

“SEND parents already have it disproportionately harder; giving them guaranteed transport enables healthier care relationships for the children.”

“Parents of SEND children need as much support as they can... without it there will be a rise in other support costs required for both parents and children”.

The point was made that if parents were unable to take a child to nursery or other setting and transport is unavailable, then this will limit the child’s ability to access pre-school learning and experiences, which are likely to make entry to and settling in at school more challenging. One respondent felt that the decision to award travel support should not be based on age.

Similarly:

“Children who need help Need Help Full Stop.”

“Should be provided where necessary due to distance and complexity of child’s needs.”

“Ceasing assistance increases the vulnerabilities and safeguarding of under 5s with SEND (and post 16s).”

There were two comments along the lines that this ‘was all about saving money’. Others said that parents were or should be responsible and that it was reasonable to expect them to make their own arrangements, although “significant additional needs can make this impossible”.

One respondent said that the policy to provide travel assistance ‘only where it is necessary, where parents are unable to do it themselves’ means that – “So families have to prove that they can’t do it themselves, which is utterly humiliating and a shame for one of the richest countries in the world”.

Question 24. Do you have any other comments on travel support for students aged 16-18 with SEND? - comments

24 people responded, with 30 comments in total.

There were a number of comments around the needs of the young person and the lack of relevance of age, e.g.

“A person with SEND doesn’t grow out of their disability.”

“My child’s needs are no different from when she was 5 to 17.”

“The age of a child doesn’t necessarily equate with ability – my son is a teenager but has the mental capacity of a Key Stage 1 child..”

Views were expressed that young people with SEND deserve support:

“These people deserve the support beyond the age of 16.”

“We should be doing everything we can to ensure children with SEND have the same life chances as others, not putting up more barriers.”

“Each child needs to be reviewed individually or you place them at high risk”.

And that ‘transport’ enabled young people to access education:

“Yes.. the transport can be the only thing that makes a 16-18 year old attend school. With consistency and continuity of the same driver, the children build up a rapport and feel safe”.

“Picking an age to cut travel is likely to prevent older children from being able to access school, college or training which is likely to have a far greater impact on their ability to live an independent life”.

As for the alternatives to organised transport, there was some scepticism expressed over the alternatives:

“I’m not convinced by the idea of travel training and encouraging independence is the right approach when it comes to vulnerable people in our society... I’m ..aware of people with SEND being disoriented and getting lost.. I don’t think their journey to school should be an added responsibility, unless it is down to the person’s choice”.

In contrast, there was one respondent said that helping young people to use buses would be “awesome”.

Concerns were raised that this was about cost cutting and would be a “disaster” for families if it was removed. To one respondent it was:

“a slippery slope... Restricting access to travel assistance allows for children to fall through the gaps, for children to be failed, for children to be put unnecessarily at risk and for already vulnerable families to be placed under greater stress.”

Question 26. Do you have any other comments on travel support for adult learners with SEND? - comments

There were 15 responses to this question. As with 16–18-year-olds, most were made in support of providing travel assistance to adult learners with SEND aged 19 year or over:

“Support them!”

The view was expressed that:

“Taking away transport could mean isolation at a significant time of their life leading to further mental health issues & unemployment.”

“Removing this service for older children and adult learners is basically removing their right to continue their education.”

The policy refers to the potential support families themselves should provide to the adult learner. A few respondents commented on this, e.g.:

“Being related to parents’ ability to support is not fair as circumstances change”

“Provision should be based solely on the needs of the young person”.

Further:

“Please consider these people have some form of disability and so waking up early to walk a distance to the bus or train station will be a big challenge for them. It means they will struggle and this can lead to them not being able to go to school”.

The council should engage with the family and young person. Some saw scope for independent travel:

“Perhaps a consultation with the adult learner and their families on suitable travel options will be best”.

“Whilst travel training should be provided where this is achievable, it would be regrettable if adult learners were still dependent on their families to transport them to education”.

“Most Adult learners with SEND require help with travel to access education; if a SEND adult is capable, they will definitely request that they use public transport and refuse anything else”.

Other suggestions were made, such as:

“The Council should provide carers to help support travel. And pay the transport costs of these carers on something like a social care Oyster card or rail cards for return journeys”

“Enforce regular reviews of EHCPs including travel and support children to achieving targets around this”.

Focus groups and other engagement activities

In this section, we look at the formal responses to the consultation and at the issues to emerge from the consultation meetings with parents and other engagement activities.

Issues from consultation meetings and other engagement activities

These can be summarised as follows;

Views of the home to school travel service

These related mainly to the school bus service, but also to the private hire taxi operation as well as the transport team in the office.

Generally, there was some very positive feedback for the service, particularly the buses.

A. has a 9 year old son at Garden school. The school bus is really crucial to her child's willingness to attend school. If the bus is not there, there won't be any life for me or for him. They don't want a mini-cab. They value the service.

Parents frequently referred to the transport service as a 'lifeline' or 'lifesaver' - "we couldn't manage without it."

Referring to an earlier strike by staff and a bus fire a couple of years ago, one parent said it was "painful" when the strike happened and when there was a fire on the bus. "We're really grateful for transport and can't imagine what it would be like without it". Another parent said:

E. "Transport is a real enabler to children attending the school that can best meet their needs. We love the bus and pray it continues. We wouldn't be able to access the positive deaf provision, social connections, and deaf community she has. This helps her education and community of friends. There's no equivalent local [school] provision".

A couple of parents raised specific concerns about, for instance, last minute changes to travel arrangements for their children, shared taxis being "too hot" and uncomfortable whilst another felt that she should not have been refused travel support for her child. Both specific problems were subsequently investigated and were put right.

Although the free text responses to the questionnaire included some positive feedback on the Transport team, one respondent here felt that:

The system is not good. It needs a policy. She and other parents feel they are fighting all the time. The person at the end of the phone [in Transport] is so rude. Says they will ring back but don't. People don't like phoning in.

Another said - 'Just wanted to say how nice some of the drivers are and thank you for their patience. Not all staff are well trained and patient, but some are'.

'Threats' to the service

A number of parents were worried that, because the Council were consulting on home to school transport and travel, that meant it was under threat of 'cuts'.

R. 'Receiving this consultation has made me panic. We have experience of consultation feedback from parents being overruled. Is Hackney trying to save costs?'

Some parents feared that the buses would be reduced and had to be reassured that taking up travel budgets and travel training was voluntary.

One parent was worried that they would have to move house or move school if transport was taken away - but was subsequently reassured that, by law, the Council had to provide free home to school travel for pupils who qualified.

Independent travel training

There were quite a lot of questions about ITT - how children would be assessed, whether it was voluntary and how and when it would become available and for whom - the age of the child or young person.

For some children and young people, it would not be appropriate.

" How could you train a child like mine that feels overwhelmed and draws attraction from others on the bus when they are vocalising or stimming to self-soothe because of overload?"

For others, it was frustrating as travel training has not been provided:

M "I have requested it, but it has not been available" - Son is 20 and only has a year but every time I ask for travel training, I was told it wasn't available. I work full-time as does my partner so we cannot support this daily. Sometimes I have to pay for a carer to take him from my own money. When I had no transport, my son missed a week of his education. For years I have been asking for travel training. If he had been able to access ITT when he was young it would have been easier but now he is 20 I don't know but I would be happy for him to try. He is non-verbal.

Travel trainers needed to be aware of the particular needs of the child and their ability to cope with different forms of transport. Paraphrasing one parent:

'Another child – the second has special needs that are not so severe. They could do travel training at some point. whilst the Overground train is ok, that's not so with the Underground, - the noise and so on'.

The debate was probably best summed up in offline conversation with one parent, paraphrased:

'She has read the description of what is going to happen. It's really good. Has a son with an EHCP. Independence should be encouraged. There is a need for greater awareness of or training in independent travel. But also, talking about and understanding safety.

Parents might have questions about independent travel. For instance, if something happened on the bus, how do they navigate it? Also, do bus drivers understand young people's anxieties? Will people on the bus understand that some young people's behaviour on the bus is because of their condition?

There is a need for young people to know how to feel safe in public spaces and where to find a safe haven. Travel training could apply to primary age children too, for that transfer to secondary school.'

One person suggested that young people travelling should be given safety alarms.

Personal Travel Budgets

This was mentioned by a few parents. Again, they were re-assured that, as with travel training, travel budgets for parents of children of compulsory school age were voluntary and that refusing either or both would not affect their eligibility for free home to school travel.

Written responses

There were two formal responses – one from Children's Social Care asking that the scope of the policy be extended so that it applies to Looked After Children with SEND who live in another authority area; the second from the Speech and Language Therapy service (SALT) asking about the ways in which children were assessed for different forms of travel and transport and about the training of staff, particularly passenger assistants:

Hackney Children’s Social Care – Head of Corporate Parenting

The Head of Corporate Parenting raised the question of the scope of the Home to School Travel policy and whether it applied to Looked After Children with special educational needs and disabilities who lived in another local authority area, but for whom Hackney Council was responsible.

The draft policy says:

‘This is the policy for the arrangements Hackney Council (the Council) makes for home to school travel for children and young people living in Hackney, including those with special educational needs or disabilities.’

The question asked was:

‘Does that mean it doesn't cover looked after children who live out of borough? If so, can that be made explicit? If not, what are they supposed to do and who has this statutory duty to them?’

The first eligibility criterion for home to school travel support is that of residence in the borough. The policy simply referred to travel support for Looked After Children as an area where the Council may apply its discretion. The new policy will be amended to show that it does indeed apply to those living outside the borough who have an Education, Health and Care plan and who are looked after by the Council.

Children’s Integrated Speech and Language Therapy Service for Hackney and the City

The letter began:

“As a service, we support the principle of young people developing travel independence provided it is achieved in a supported way which takes into account, and accommodates, each young person’s communication needs, executive functioning differences and respects the young person’s own views and opinions about becoming independent”.

It then outlines a number of areas in the policy where clarification is sought:

2.5 Assessment of a child’s request for travel assistance – how is information sought and how does the consultation with other services work?

2.7 & 2.13. The extent to which family circumstances and working arrangements can be considered when assessing a request for travel assistance.

2.8 & 5.8 More information asked for on travel training – who will deliver it, the breadth of their knowledge and of the assessment process.

3.4 Training for drivers and passenger assistants. Training is seen as being largely ad hoc. The transport team would benefit from a well-considered CPD plan (e.g. a rolling 2 year training offer) by a multidisciplinary team.

4.3 Would 2-year-olds with significant SEND attending a nursery setting qualify for discretionary funding?

Will the Attendance team monitor the impact of independent travel on lateness?

Responses

Both written submissions are being acted on.

1. Consultation meetings/ focus group sessions

There were 4 planned sessions, 3 of which were successful. These were online meetings. Each started with a powerpoint presentation:

Setting the context and presenting the proposed changes

This talked through compulsory and discretionary aspects of the policy.

- 720 children receive home-to-school travel.
- £ 6 million spend by Hackney average cost £10 k per year = £100 k over a pupil's education (5-16)
- Independent Travel Training
- Personal Budgets
- Proposals not changing service provision dramatically.
- Consultation extended until 17th May.

Consultation meetings were attended by 25 parents in all plus Council staff.

There were also email conversations and phone calls with 5 other parents or members of the public.

Easy Read survey

An image-based Easy Read survey was made available for people with learning disabilities or others who preferred this over a fully word-based survey. A total of 20 responses were collected. The findings are reflected in this section. The questions were in essence the same as in the online survey but the wording had been adapted.

To view a copy of the Easy Read survey, [click here](#).

How do you travel to school?

The majority of respondents (20) stated that they travelled to school on a Hackney bus. This was followed by pupils travelling to school with their family (7), and in a taxi (2).

What do you like about your journey to school?

The majority of respondents (8) stated that they liked travelling with their friends. The remaining respondents stated that they liked the people who help me (7) and the vehicle (7).

Other comments made were:

I like to sleep on the bus.

I like the drivers, they are kind and quiet.

I am happy on the bus because I talk to my friends.

I like looking out of the window and seeing different shops.

I like travelling to school with my friend.

The journey is beautiful.

I like everything.

My journey is good, relaxing, and funny.

Everything is fine, I enjoy coming to school.

I like travelling on the bus.

I avoid the rain!

I like talking to my mum.

I like listening to music.

What is difficult about your journey to school?

Respondents spoke about the length of the journey being too long because of traffic and picking up other students, the sounds on the bus; it being too loud, the journey being boring. There were also a few comments about the journey to the bus stop being too long.

Would you like to change how you travel to school?

Six respondents made comments to this question. Half of these respondents expressed wanting to travel via bus. One respondent stated they wanted to travel by car to school.

Is there anything else you want to tell us about travelling to school?

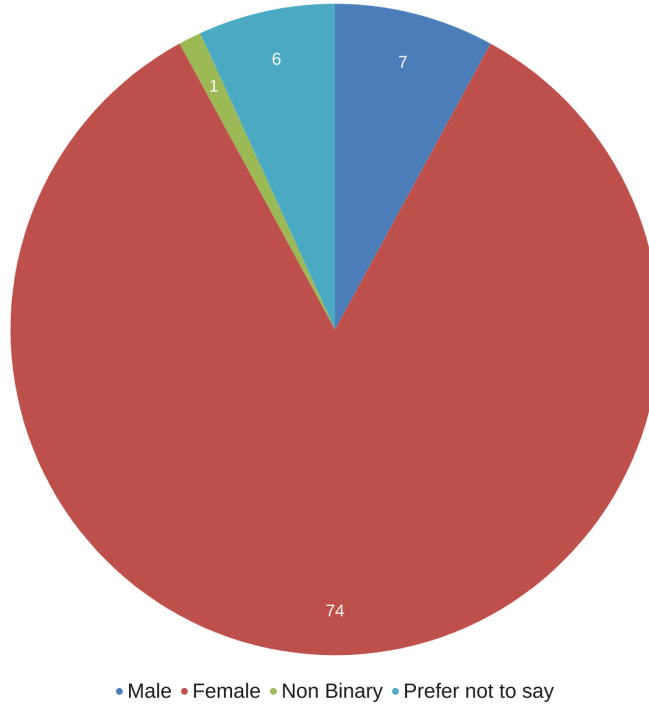
Two comments were made to this question. These were:

I like music

I like my journey on the bus

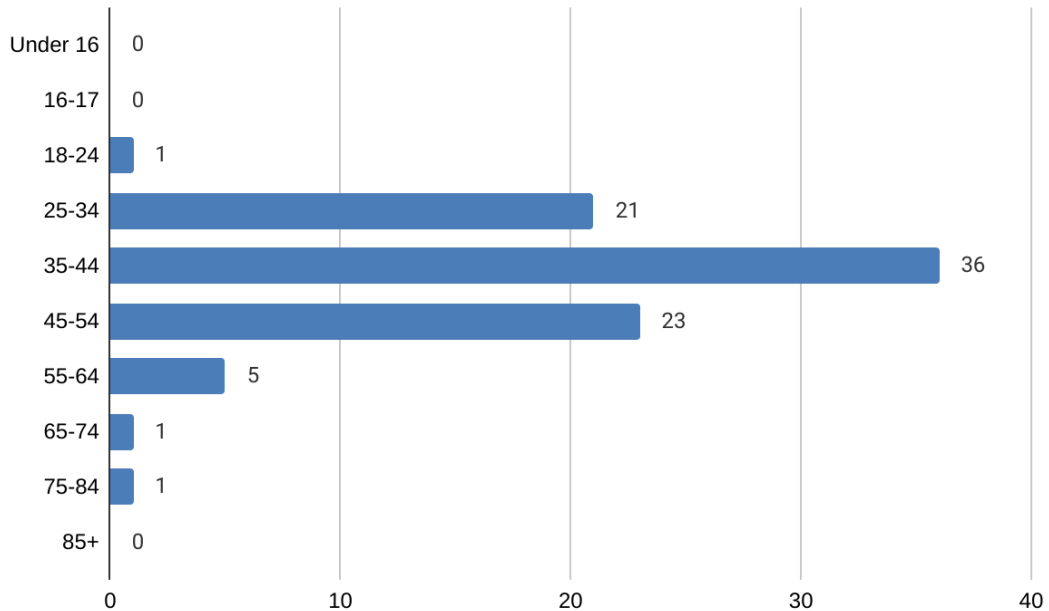
About you

Gender: Are you... (Base 88)



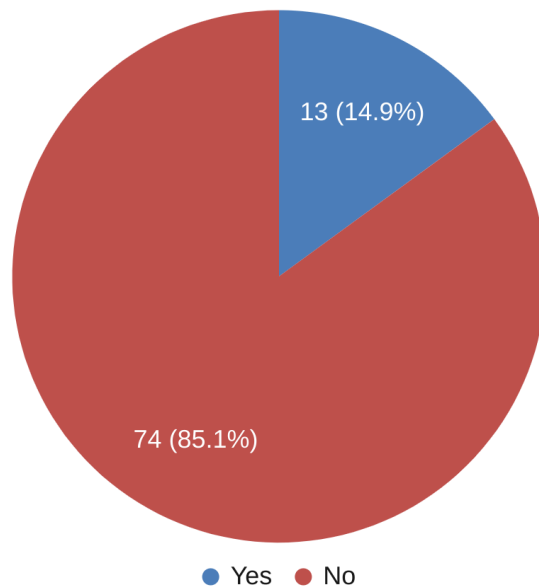
The majority of respondents stated that they were female (74), followed by male (7), prefer not to say (6) and non-binary (1).

Age group: Are you... (Base 88)



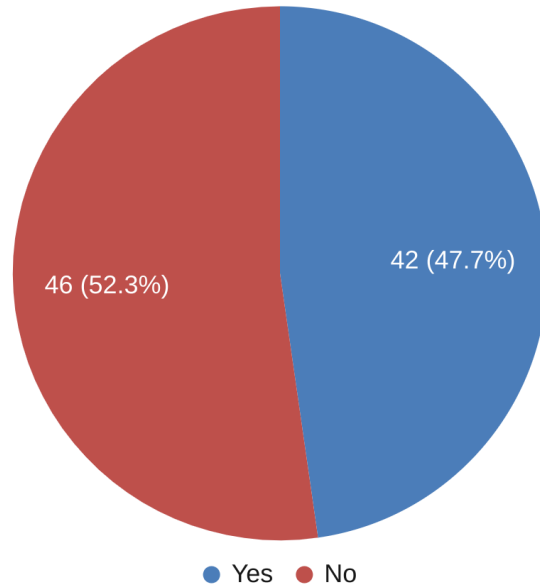
The age group with the highest number of respondents was 35-44 (36), followed by 45-54 (23), 25-34 (21), 55-64 (5) and 18-24, 65-74 and 75-84 (1 each).

Disability (Base 87)



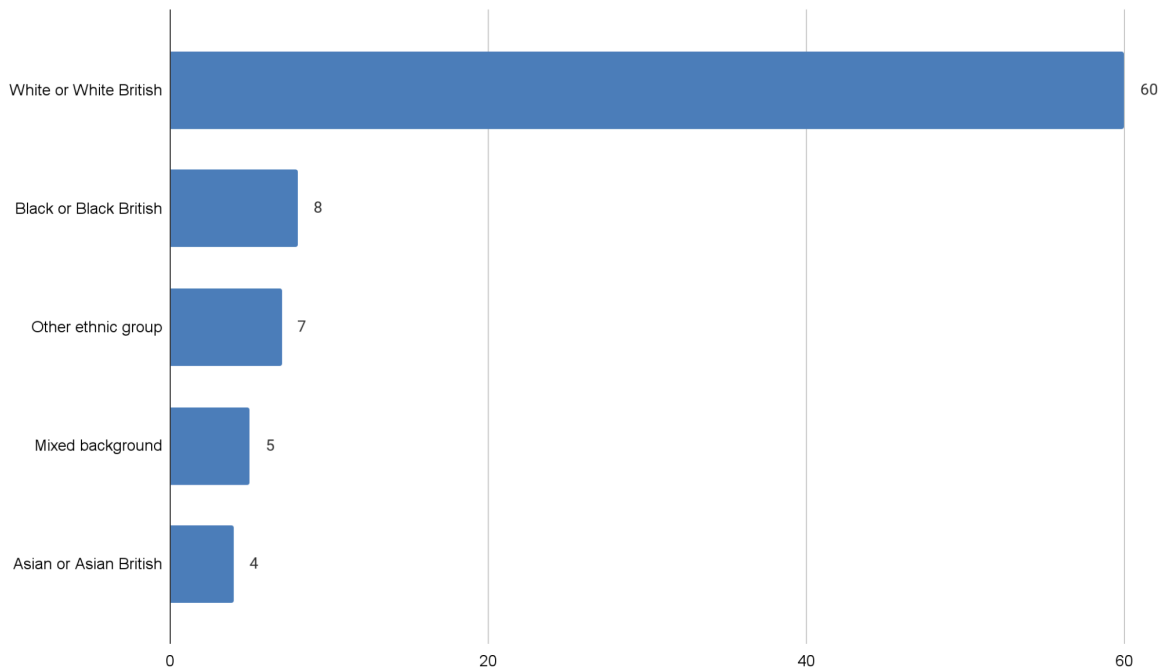
The majority of respondents stated that they did not have a disability (74), with 13 respondents stating that they do.

Caring responsibilities (Base 88)



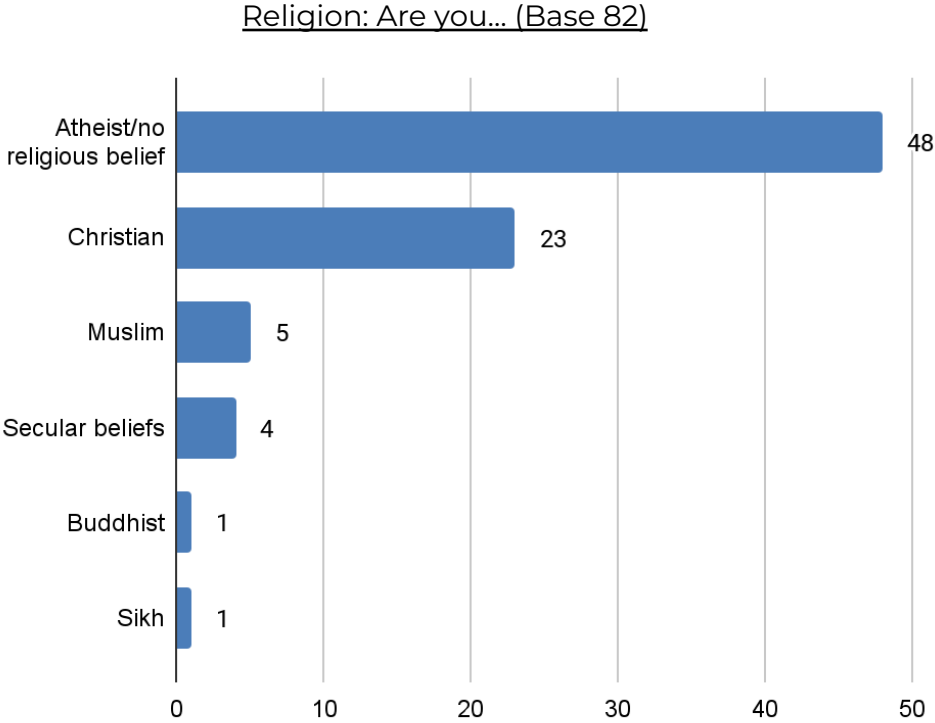
Almost half of the respondents (42) stated that they have a caring responsibility, with 46 stating that they did not.

Ethnicity: Are you... (Base 84)



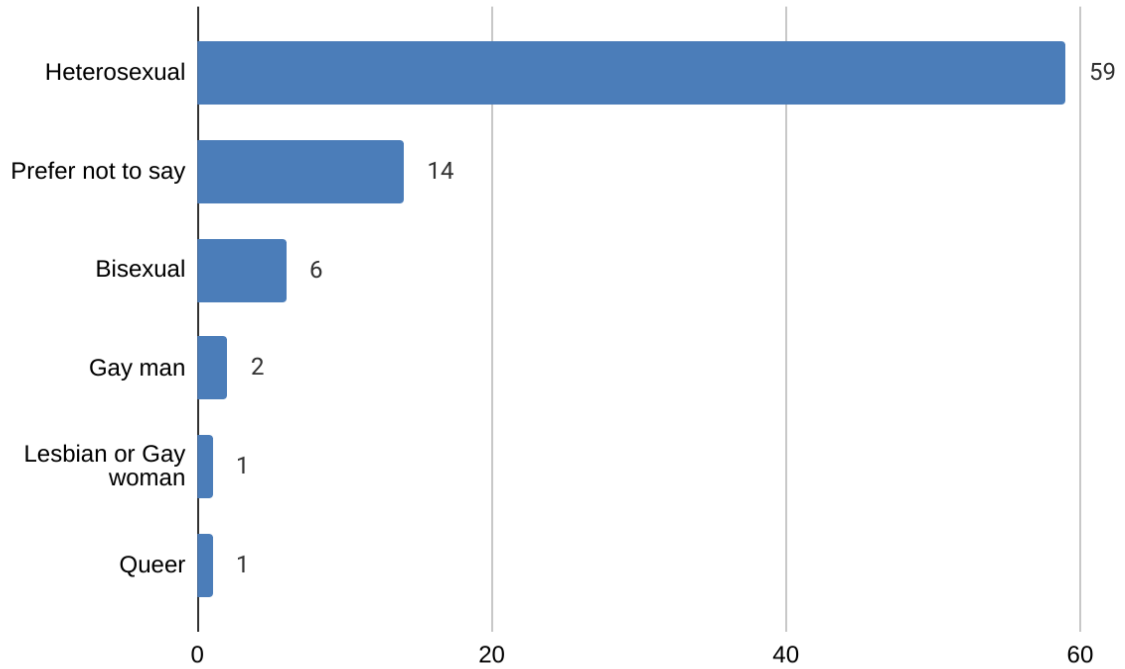
The majority of respondents stated that they were White or White British (60),

followed by Black or Black British (8), other ethnic group (7), mixed background (5) and Asian or Asian British (4).



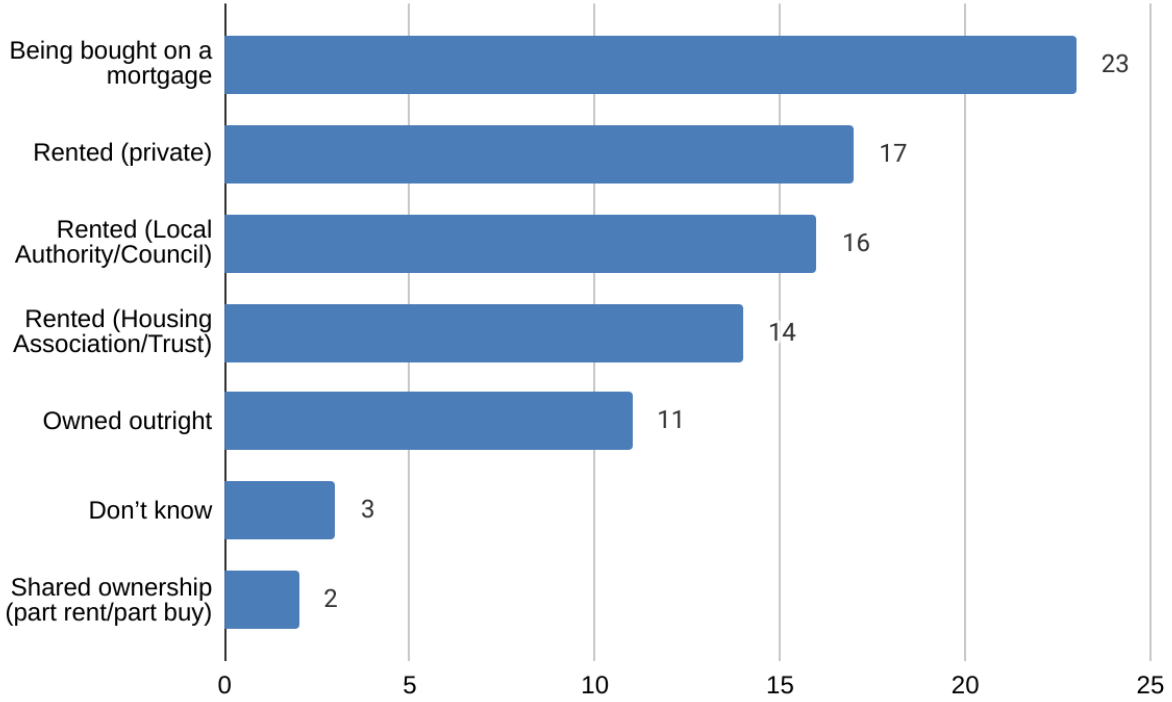
The majority of respondents stated that they were Atheist/no religious belief (48), followed by Christian (23), Muslim (5), secular beliefs (4), Buddhist (1) and Sikh (1).

Sexual orientation: Are you... (Base 83)



The majority of respondents stated that they were heterosexual (59), followed by those that prefer not to say (14), bisexual (6), gay man (2), lesbian or gay woman (1) and queer (1).

Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home? (Base 86)



The tenure with the highest number of respondents was those who have a home being bought on a mortgage (23), followed by rented privately (17), rented from the Council (16), rented from the Housing Association/Trust (14), owned outright (11), don't know (3) and shared ownership (2).