

Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government
Welsh Government
5th Floor
Ty Hywel
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Re: Concerns regarding last-minute communication of school transport changes

We at the National Autistic Society Cymru are writing on behalf of parents who have contacted us with concerns about the timing and communication of changes to school transport arrangements in advance of the new academic year.

In many areas, families only received notification of changes in the days immediately before the start of term, in some cases on the Friday afternoon before the start of term. While this creates disruption for all families, the consequences can be particularly harmful for children and young people with Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

Children with ALN often depend on established routines, predictable environments, and trusted relationships with drivers and escorts in order to travel to school safely and with minimal distress. Sudden alterations to transport provision, communicated at the last minute, means that families can lack the time necessary to prepare their children, liaise with schools, or make alternative arrangements. This can risk heightened anxiety, missed attendance, and in some cases, financial loss for poorer parents who have to make alternative arrangements to work schedules.

We are concerned that this approach is inconsistent with the duties placed on local authorities under various pieces of legislation including the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, and the Equality Act 2010, all of which require that reasonable adjustments are made and that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration. Last-minute communication of fundamental transport changes does not, in our view, meet these obligations.

We therefore urge the Welsh Government to update its guidance to local authorities requiring that transport arrangements for the forthcoming school year are confirmed and communicated well in advance of term start dates, with specific recognition of the needs of children with ALN.

Considering the considerable public interest in this matter, we intend to publish this letter online. We look forward to a positive response, which we will of course publish online and share with the many parents who contacted us.

Yours sincerely,

James Radcliffe
External Affairs Manager – Wales