**Briefing 2 for Brighton & Hove PaCC Network on HTST**

**Purpose of the briefing**

* For all parents/carers whose children and young people who receive home to school transport in Brighton & Hove
* To keep you further updated on our response to problems relating to the recent new arrangements with our transport providers and future plans
* This information can be shared widely
* This is an update on the previous briefing found here: 

**Update on home to school transport arrangements**

* All of the 30 children and young people who were originally affected with no transport at the start of term now have permanent travel arrangements in place.
* Part of our long-term plan is to expand the capacity of our in-house council transport team. We are currently recruiting for a new manager for the team.
* We’re getting support from other teams across the council to make sure the service is well managed while the new team is being set up. As part of this support we’ve brought in one of the council’s senior health & safety managers on a temporary basis.

**What Health & Safety Measures are in place?**

* We know that questions have been raised about the safety of some of the arrangements we put in place where the new contracts started in September.
* We would like to assure you that we do have good checks in place. Where concerns have been raised with us we have investigated them promptly and where necessary, changed the arrangements we have made.
* All contracted vehicles are expected to have CCTV installed. Just before half-term we found that one contractor did not yet have that in place. We took immediate steps to ensure there were DBS checked Vehicle Passenger Assistants (VPA) in place on those routes. The operator has confirmed that CCTV was installed over half term.
* Three spot checks have been undertaken since the start of term. During those checks two vehicles were immediately removed from service. One of these vehicles was in an unacceptable condition. The other vehicle is now back in service – allegations had been made about it, but when we looked into these allegations we found they were without foundation.
* All taxi drivers are required to have an enhanced DBS check to obtain their licence. We also require all VPAs to have DBS checks in place. Part of the work our contractor Edge has undertaken is double-checking that all DBS checks are in place and to load the data into the council’s new software. This will help us with future spot checks and compliance checks.
* We are grateful to all the families who have sent us updated pupil information sheets. Only 10 families have not returned them yet. In the meantime we have shared relevant data with our transport operators.
* Every year we find there are a small number of parents/carers who don’t complete the forms we send them. If you haven’t yet done so, please complete your pupil information sheets and return them to us as soon as possible.
* We will also be looking at how we can improve this system of checking with parents about any changes to the circumstances of their child and how you can raise any concerns with us and our appeal process
* If you have any concerns or questions about the service you’re receiving, please contact us. Our contact information is given below. We try to respond to queries as quickly as possible. We always have staff available during office hours to deal with urgent matters. We also encourage feedback from our special schools about how the transport arrangements are working there.
* If you think we have failed to sort out a query or complaint you have made, you can follow our appeal process. We will always try to consider appeals as soon as we can to try and resolve things for you. But sometimes it can take a little while for us to collect evidence, or for review panels to be established.
* We know some of you still have concerns about the length of journeys, and how the pickup/collection times are impacting on the school day. We continue to try and resolve these issues directly with individual families.

**Update on Independent Review**

* At the council’s children, young people and skills (CYPS) committee meeting in September we apologised unreservedly to families for the distress and anxiety caused this term. We promised we would arrange a full and fearless independent review so that we can learn lessons and ensure the problems do not happen again.
* We have listened to your concerns about the need for this review to be robust and independent. A formal procurement process is now underway to secure the right independent review team. We’re extremely grateful to the PaCC steering group for their advice and suggestions about the review.
* We will be sharing objective evaluations of the people who are shortlisted to undertake the review with the PaCC Steering Group and various other groups. They will let Chief Executive know their views on the possible reviewers. The council’s Chief Executive will then make the final decision on who is going to lead the review once he has listened to what PaCC and other groups have to say.
* This process has taken longer to start than originally anticipated, and we apologise for this. But we’re still hoping the review will be ready in time for our CYPS committee on Monday 13 January.
* Families should hear soon about how to participate in the review. This could include invites to focus groups.

**Cross-party Member led Policy Panel**

* Following discussions at our Full Council meeting on 24 October we have also agreed to set up a policy panel made up of councillors.
* Six councillors will sit on the panel. The panel’s chair will be an opposition councillor, rather than one who is part of the current administration.
* The panel will consider the outcomes of the review and look at what went wrong with the new arrangements and to make sure things are better moving forward. It will work to make sure any proposals and recommendations that come out of the independent review are carried out.

**Going forward**

* Right from the start we had always planned to review how our new home to school transport arrangements were working. Because of the problems we’ve had we’ve already reviewed things and changed our action plan.
* We would like to assure you that this action plan is looking to address all the issues you’ve raised with us. We are committed to working with parents, carers, schools staff and other stakeholders on any future changes. We will continue to talk to PaCC on how best to introduce any changes.
* We recognise that we need to do better with risk assessment and management, and with recording these processes. We are reviewing our work in this area as a priority.

**Further information**

* If you have any questions, concerns or need more information please email hometoschooltransport@brighton-hove.gov.uk or call 01273 29350.
* The feedback you give us on how the new arrangements have worked or are working for you is very important to us. If you have any concerns, please let us know as soon as you can so that we can address them and try to make things better.
* You don’t need to wait for the review to start before giving us feedback on your experiences!