

Learner Travel

Consultation document

Date of issue: 14 October 2019

Action required: Responses by 5 January 2020

Tel: (01656) 643 664

Email: consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

Web: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation

Learner Travel Consultation Document

Overview

This consultation is to invite views on potential changes to the travel arrangements for pupils and college learners, and how any proposed changes to the Home to School/College Transport Policy will affect you and your family.

How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **14 October 2019** and close on the **5 January 2020**. You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

Tel: (01656) 643 664

Email: Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

Online: [Link to survey](#)

Post: Communications, Marketing and Engagement, Bridgend County Borough Council, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB. Alternative formats are also available upon request.

Data protection

Information provided by you on this form will be used to inform the Home to School/College Transport Policy.

The Council will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality and to comply with data protection legislation. Your information may be shared with relevant service areas for the purposes of future policy development. Your information will be retained in accordance with the Council's Data Retention Policy.

You have a number of rights under data protection legislation. You may also withdraw your consent and ask us to delete your personal information at any time by contacting us. Further information about this is available on our website or you may contact the Data Protection Officer.

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which we process your personal data then you have the option to make a complaint to the Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioner's Office.

Legal and Regulatory Services

Email: foi@bridgend.gov.uk

Address: Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

Information Commissioner's Office – Wales

2nd Floor, Churchill House
Churchill Way
Cardiff
CF10 2HH

Tel. 0330 414 6421

Email: wales@ico.org.uk

Related documents

[Learner Travel \(Wales\) Measure 2008.](#)

[Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013.](#)

[Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance June 2014](#)

For more information on consultations in Bridgend County Borough or how to join our Citizens' panel.

Visit: www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation

Why is the local authority consulting on proposed changes to its Home to School/College Transport Policy?

Bridgend County Borough Council is currently facing unprecedented cuts to its budget. The local authority currently faces making required savings of £35.2 million over the period 2019-2023. The local authority takes pride in the services it provides to its citizens and wants to continue to do as much as possible to support families in a difficult financial climate.

These cuts however, means that the local authority must review all of the services that it provides.

Local Authorities in Wales need to ensure that they are providing home-to-school transport where the law says they have a duty to do so. Local authorities can also provide transport on a discretionary basis.

The local authority's current Home to School/College Transport Policy sets out how the local authority provides home-to-school and home-to-college transport.

The local authority's current policy came into effect on 1 September 2016. The local authority is now seeking the views of the public and other stakeholders on proposed changes to the current policy.

This consultation is to invite views on potential changes to the travel arrangements of school pupils and students attending further education colleges.

The local authority must consider if it can continue to provide the current assistance beyond what it is required to do by law.

The review of the local authority's current Home to School/College Transport Policy contributes to the local authority's wider budget strategy by making the most efficient use of resources.

Home-to-school transport falls into two categories, as follows:

Statutory

- The arrangements the local authority needs to make by law, to enable free travel for those learners who are entitled.

Discretionary

- The arrangements made through choice by the local authority.

At present, the local authority has a legal duty to provide free transport to school for:

- all learners receiving statutory primary education (aged 5-11) living two miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school, or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated;
- all learners receiving statutory secondary education (aged 11-16) living three miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated;
- all learners who attend a specialist provision and cannot walk to school because of their additional learning need / special education need, disability or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated above.

There are currently no requirements to provide free home-to-school transport for learners who:

- are not of statutory school age - this includes nursery aged children as well as post-16 students;
- are not attending their nearest suitable school.

At present, the local authority provides free transport on a **discretionary basis** for:

- all learners attending nursery school (age 3-4) living 1.5 miles or more from their nearest suitable school, or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated;
- all post-16 learners (age 16-18) who live over three miles to either their nearest suitable school (sixth-form) or to the nearest college that provides the course they wish to study and are studying their first course of full-time study.
- learners attending their nearest voluntary aided (faith) school and the distance criteria of two miles for primary age pupils and three miles for secondary age pupils is met.

- learners attending their nearest Welsh-medium school and with the distance criteria of two miles for primary age pupils and three miles for secondary age pupils is met.
- Pupils who were the siblings of pupils eligible at the former distances of 1.5 miles for primary age pupils and two miles for secondary age pupils, prior to the policy change in September 2016 and attend the same school, also receive free home-to-school transport under the same distances.
- Pupils who were already in receipt of free home-to-school transport at the former distances of 1.5 miles for primary age pupils and two miles for secondary age pupils prior to the policy change in September 2016, continue to benefit from free-home-to-school transport under the former distances. This arrangement continues until they leave or move schools or transition from one phase of education to another, eg primary to secondary.

Active Travel

Bridgend County Borough Council needs to pay due regard to the Welsh Government's Active Travel Action Plan for Wales and the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013. The action plan aims to address congestion and encourage people to walk and cycle more often. The Welsh Government estimates that one in five cars on the road at 8:50am on a weekday is for the school run. Congestion in towns is therefore a serious issue. The Active Travel Action Plan sets out the actions that the Welsh Government and its partners will take to encourage more people to walk and cycle for more journeys. It is hoped that this will not only improve the health of our young people, but also improve the health and well-being of those who live and work in the area.

What will it mean if we do not make this change?

The council takes pride in the services it provides to its citizens and wants to continue to do as much as possible to support families in a difficult financial climate. However, the savings associated with the following proposals are needed because the budget pressures for the next three years are significant and unprecedented. The learner travel arrangements currently provided by Bridgend County Borough Council are amongst the most generous to be found in Wales. Financial savings of £1.78m have already been made to the learner travel budget since 2014/2015 through efficiencies.

The Consultation Process

An important part of the process, when considering any change, is to gauge the views of the public and other stakeholders. The purpose of this consultation document is therefore to outline the **proposed** changes. This document has been prepared to provide stakeholders with information about the new proposals to allow stakeholders the opportunity to have their say.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period all comments received will be presented to the local authority's Cabinet and all views expressed will be taken into account when the Cabinet make any decision.

If it is decided to implement the proposals, these will come into effect on the **1 September 2021**.

If it is decided not to go ahead with the proposal, it may be that an alternative proposal may be sought.

The table below sets out the timetable for the consultation:

What	When
Consultation begins	14 October 2019
Consultation ends	5 January 2020
Proposed implementation date for new policy	September 2021

(Please note that any response received after the consultation has ended will not be considered)

Who is being consulted

- The public
- Learners and their parents/carers
- Schools and colleges
- Careers Wales
- RhAG
- Welsh Government
- Diocesan authorities
- Councillors
- Regional AMs
- Local MPs
- The First Minister
- Town and community councils
- Neighbouring councils
- Estyn
- School governors
- Public Service Board members
- The Bridgend School Admissions Forum
- Bridgend Equalities Forum (BEF) members
- Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum (BCCEF) members

How to respond

The local authority is asking the public and other stakeholders to answer the questions and provide their views via an [on-line survey](#). The local authority is able to provide paper copies of the survey and in accessible formats, on request. Please e-mail your request to consultation@bridgend.gov.uk or Tel. (01656) 642617

You can also respond by sending paper survey forms to:

Post: Communications, Marketing and Engagement,
Bridgend County Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

The outcomes of the consultation will be reported to the Cabinet of Bridgend County Borough Council. If there is a decision not to proceed, that will be the end of this proposal and an alternative proposal may be sought.

If any of the proposals are accepted by Cabinet the earliest the change(s) will come into effect is 1 September 2021.

Events

For those consultees who wish to take the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed new policy, consultation drop-in events will be held. You **must** book to attend one of these events by either using the following [link](#) or by e-mailing consultation@bridgend.gov.uk or Tel. (01656) 643664.

Venue	Time	Date
Pencoed Comprehensive School	18:00	11/11/2019
Maesteg School	18:00	13/11/2019
Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	18:00	18/11/2019
Cynffig Comprehensive School	18:00	19/11/2019
Brynteg School	18:00	20/11/2019
Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	18:00	21/11/2019
Bryntirion Comprehensive	18:00	26/11/2019
Porthcawl Comprehensive School	18:00	03/12/2019
Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen	18:00	04/12/2019
Bridgend College, Cowbridge Road	18:00	05/12/2019

The Proposals

Proposal 1

Withdrawal of transport for all learners benefitting from available walking routes to school, in line with statutory distances of two miles for primary age pupils and three miles for secondary age pupils.

This would mean that from September 2021 the following would apply to the council's provision of free school transport:

- Pupils attending primary schools living two miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.
- Pupils attending secondary schools living three miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.
- Pupils attending the nearest faith school of their religion within the county borough, living two miles or further for primary schools and three miles or further for secondary schools would receive free transport.
- Pupils attending the nearest Welsh language schools in the county borough, living two miles or further for primary schools and three miles or further for secondary schools, would receive free transport, regardless of whether the school is considered to be the nearest suitable school.
- Any previous protection offered to sibling groups benefitting from home-to-school transport at the former distances of 1.5 miles for primary pupils and two miles for secondary pupils, will cease from 1 September 2021.
- Any previous protection offered to pupils under the former distances of 1.5 miles for primary pupils and two miles for secondary pupils will cease from 1 September 2021.

Proposal 2

Removal of escorts from all taxis and minibuses of less than 8 passengers.

There is no law to say the council needs to provide escorts on any home-to-school transport.

The change would mean that pupils travelling in smaller vehicles provided by the council would no longer have an escort on board. The driver of the vehicle would act as driver/escort.

However, the local authority would consider on a case-by-case basis the provision of an escort for any child with additional learning needs (ALN) or for a looked-after child following an appropriate assessment of their needs.

Proposal 3

Removal from the local authority's Home to School/College Transport Policy of specific examples of the special circumstances where the local authority will provide discretionary transport.

The council may on occasion provide home-to-school transport to pupils who are not currently eligible. The current policy gives specific examples of the circumstances where discretionary transport might be considered.

This proposal will mean that specific examples of the special circumstances where the local authority will provide discretionary transport provided to pupils, will be removed from the local authority's Home to School/College Transport Policy.

Proposal 4

To stop providing free transport for learners aged 16 or over, who go to school or college other than those pupils who attend a Welsh-medium sixth-form at a school within Bridgend or who wish to pursue up a faith-based education in a sixth-form at a voluntary aided school within Bridgend.

There is no law that says the council needs to provide free transport for post-16 pupils and students continuing into further education or sixth-form.

However, the council understands that there may be an impact on learners and their families who rely on this free service to support their learning.

The local authority is committed to support the development of, and acknowledges its statutory duty to promote the Welsh language. Therefore, as there is currently only one Welsh-medium sixth-form within Bridgend, which is located at the north of the Llynfi Valley, it is likely that the withdrawal of post-16 transport will have a disproportionate impact on learners wishing to attend this school given the distances they would need to travel from the rest of the county borough. Similarly, the local authority respects the wishes of learners who wish to pursue a faith-based education and acknowledges that as there is only one voluntary aided secondary school within Bridgend offering a faith-based education, it is likely that the withdrawal of post-16 transport will have a disproportionate impact on learners wishing to attend this school, given the distances learners would need to travel from the rest of the county borough.

It is important to note that some learners will already receive Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This is an income assessed weekly allowance of £30 to help students with the cost of further education, including transport.

Additionally the 'mytravelpass' scheme funded by the Welsh Government, provides discounted bus fares to young people aged 16 to 21 with approximately one third off their bus fare.

Proposal 5

To stop providing free transport for nursery age pupils (ages 3 & 4)

There is no law that says the council needs to provide free transport for nursery pupils. Bridgend County Borough Council is one of the few councils in Wales offering this provision. The council understands that there may be an impact on learners and their families who rely on this free service to support their learning.

Summary of Proposals

The following table shows examples of what the proposed changes may mean if approved:

Post-16 transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
Post-16 student (English-medium) Attending Bridgend College	Free home-to-college transport provided over three miles from college or where there is no available walking route.	No travel assistance offered
Post-16 student (English-medium) Attends sixth-form at <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brynteg School• Pencoed Comprehensive School• Cynffig Comprehensive School• Porthcawl Comprehensive School• Coleg Cymunedol Y Dderwen• Maesteg School• Bryntirion Comprehensive School	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.	No travel assistance offered
Post-16 student (Welsh-medium) Attends sixth-form at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.	No change

Post-16 transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
Post-16 student (Faith) Attends sixth-form at Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.	No change
Post-16 student with ALN/SEN in specialist provision	Free home-to-school transport provided if over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route. Free home-to-school transport also provided at the discretion of the local authority	Free home-to-school transport provided at the discretion of the local authority
Post-16 student with ALN/SEN not in a specialist provision	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.	Free home-to-school transport provided at the discretion of the local authority

Secondary age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
Secondary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 11-16 Attends a secondary school which is their nearest available school, and they live over three miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists.	Free home-to-school transport provided	No change

Secondary age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
<p>Secondary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 11-16</p> <p>Attends a secondary school but it is not their nearest available school, as a parent has expressed their parental preference for an alternative school.</p>	No home-to-school transport provided	No change
<p>Secondary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 11-16</p> <p>Attends a secondary school which is their nearest available school, and they live over two miles from the school and they were previously in receipt of free home-to-school transport at this distance when the policy changed in September 2016.</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	Home-to-school transport provided only where the pupil lives over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.
<p>Secondary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 11-16</p> <p>Attends a secondary school which is their nearest available school and they live over two miles from the school as they became eligible for free transport when the policy changed in September 2016 as a</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	Home-to-school transport provided only where the pupil lives over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.

Secondary age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
sibling was already attending the same school and was already in receipt of free home-to-school transport at this distance.		

Primary age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
<p>Primary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 5-11</p> <p>Attends a primary school which is their nearest available school, and they live over two miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists.</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	No change
<p>Primary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 5-11</p> <p>Attends a primary school, but it is not their nearest available school as a parent has expressed their parental preference for an alternative school.</p>	No home-to-school transport provided	No change

Primary age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
<p>Primary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 5-11</p> <p>Attends a primary school which is their nearest available school, and they live over 1.5 miles from the school, as they were previously in receipt of free home-to-school transport at this distance when the policy changed in September 2016.</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	Home-to-school transport provided only where the pupil lives over two miles from school or where there is no available walking route.
<p>Primary age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 5-11</p> <p>Attends a primary school which is their nearest available school and they live over 1.5 miles from the school and they became eligible for free transport when the policy changed in September 2016 as a sibling was already attending the same school and was already in receipt of free home-to-school transport at this distance.</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	Home-to-school transport provided only where the pupil lives over two miles from school or where there is no available walking route.

Nursery age school transport		
Learner type	Current Arrangement	Proposed Arrangement (from September 2021)
<p>Nursery age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 3-4</p> <p>Attends nursery school which is their nearest available school, and they live over 1.5 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists.</p>	Home-to-school transport provided	No home-to-school transport provided
<p>Nursery age pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium and faith-based education) Age 3-4</p> <p>Attends nursery school, but it is not their nearest available school as a parent has expressed their parental preference for an alternative school.</p>	No home-to-school transport provided	No change

Some learners with ALN/SEN who are of compulsory school age have their needs met within a mainstream school setting, but with prescribed support (confirmed on their Statement of Special Education Needs). For these learners travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis.