

Learner Travel Consultation Document

Date of issue: 10 April 2024

Action required: Responses by 3 July 2024

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 **10 April 2024** and close on the **3 July 2024**. You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

Tel: (01656) 643 664

Email: Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk

Online: <https://beinvolvedbridgend.uk.engagementhq.com/learner-travel-survey>

Post: Communications, Marketing and Engagement, Bridgend County Borough local authority, 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 a future decision by Cabinet on proposed changes the current 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 pressures on its budget which will result in the need to make significant budget reductions over the next four years. This is set against a backdrop of a projected overspend of £1.157M for home-to-school transport in 2023-2024. As one of the most generous learner travel policy offers in Wales, there is a proposed £792k saving for 2025-26 in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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.

Budget pressures 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 pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils 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 pupils as well as Post-16 pupils;
- are not attending their nearest suitable school.

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

- all pupils 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, for example, from primary to secondary education.

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 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 four 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.

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 considered when the Cabinet make any decision.

If it is decided to implement the proposals, these will come into effect on the **1 September 2025**.

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	10 April 2024
Consultation ends	3 July 2024
Proposed implementation date for new policy	1 September 2025

(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 governing bodies
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg Public Services Board
- The Bridgend School Admissions Forum
- Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum (BCCEF)
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- Bridgend Youth Council

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,
Raven's Court, Wing 3,
Brewery Lane, Bridgend, CF31 4AP

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 2025.

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 **no later than 18 May 2024**, by either using the following [link](#) or by e-mailing consultation@bridgend.gov.uk or Tel. (01656) 643664.

These dates may be subject to change and registered attendees will be notified of any changes.

Venue	Time	Date
Maesteg School	18:00	23/05/2024
Pencoed Comprehensive School	18:00	10/06/2024
Porthcawl Primary School	18:00	14/06/2024
Bridgend College, Cowbridge Road	18:00	20/06/2024

The proposals

Proposal 1

Withdrawal of legacy transport for all learners benefitting from an identified and available (safe) walking route to school, to fall in line with the statutory distances of two miles for primary school-age pupils and three miles for secondary school-age pupils.

This would mean that from September 2025 pupils who are currently receiving free home-to-school transport, even though they reside less than the statutory distances of 2 miles for primary school pupils and 3 miles for secondary school pupils, and where the local authority has identified an available walking route, this provision will now be removed.

Proposal 2

Removal of 'sibling' and 'in-receipt' protection for pupils.

The change would mean that pupils whose siblings passed down to them the more generous eligibility under the former policy distances of 1.5 miles for primary school pupils and 2 miles for secondary school pupils, would lose this eligibility from September 2025. All pupils will therefore only be eligible where they live over 2 miles for primary school pupils and 3 miles for secondary school pupils or where there is no available walking route to school.

Proposal 3

Removal of all transport for Nursery pupils

Home-to-school transport for Nursery pupils is non-statutory. The local authority provides this by discretion. Nursery transport is currently provided to pupils residing over 1.5 miles from their home to their nearest suitable school.

The current proposal seeks to remove this discretion, given that Nursery education is non-statutory. Nevertheless, it is important to identify the local authority's duty to support Welsh-medium education and also faith-based education. Therefore, for Nursery pupils attending Welsh-medium schools and faith schools, it is proposed that the provision will be retained.

Proposal 4

Removal of all Post-16 transport

There is no statutory duty to provide free transport for Post-16 learners to schools or colleges. Pupils attending sixth forms in secondary schools benefit from transport from home to their nearest suitable school, under the same distance criteria as pupils of statutory school age (that is, those

living more than 3 miles from home to the nearest suitable (catchment) school receive free home-to-school transport).

Similarly, those attending further education colleges receive free home-to-college transport to the closest college offering the first course of their choice as full-time study if they live over 3 miles from home-to-college.

It is therefore proposed to remove this provision, but acknowledging the disproportionate impact that such a proposal would have on Welsh-medium and faith-based education, this proposal does not apply to those pupils attending secondary Welsh-medium and faith school sixth forms.

Proposal 5

The offer to parents/carers of pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) the option of a 'transport budget' providing a mileage allowance of £45p per mile.

As some pupils often have very complex needs, in particular, those with medical conditions, it has become more difficult for the local authority to source suitable transport.

If this proposal was implemented parents/carers of pupils with ALN would be offered the (current) Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) mileage rate of 45p per mile for the journey to and from school (for journeys up to 10,000 miles).

It is proposed that this offer would apply to all pupils with ALN on special taxis and minibuses equally, regardless of the likelihood of this proposal invoking a saving to the local authority.

It is important to note that any personal tax implications would be the responsibility of any parents/carers wishing to accept this offer.

Summary of proposals

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

Transport for Post-16 pupils/learner		
Pupil/learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
Post-16 learner (English-medium) Attending Bridgend College or the nearest	Free home-to-college transport provided over three miles from college or where there is no available walking route. This is normally provided	No home-to-college transport provided.

Transport for Post-16 pupils/learner

Pupil/learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
college offering the first course of full-time study.	via a public service bus pass).	
<p>Post-16 learner (English-medium) Attends sixth form at:</p> <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 	<p>Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school, or where there is no available walking route.</p> <p>This is normally provided via a contracted school bus, minibus, or taxi.</p>	No home-to-school transport provided.
<p>Post-16 learner (Welsh-medium) Attends sixth form at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd</p>	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school, or where there is no available walking route.	No change.
<p>Post-16 learner (faith-based education) Attends sixth form at Archbishop McGrath Catholic High School or Bishop of Llandaff Church in Wales High School.</p>	Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school, or where there is no available walking route.	No change.

Transport for Post-16 pupils/learner

Pupil/learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
<p>Post-16 learner with additional learning needs (ALN) in specialist provision</p>	<p>Free home-to-school transport provided if over three miles from school, or where there is no available walking route.</p> <p>Free home-to-school transport also provided at the discretion of the local authority based on the individual needs of learner.</p>	<p>Free home-to-school transport provided at the discretion of the local authority following an assessment of the needs of the individual learner.</p>
<p>Post-16 learner with ALN not in a specialist provision</p>	<p>Free home-to-school transport provided over three miles from school or where there is no available walking route.</p>	<p>Free home-to-school transport provided at the discretion of the local authority following an assessment of the needs of the learner.</p>

School transport for secondary school pupils

Pupil/learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
<p>Secondary school pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium, and faith-based education)</p> <p>Age 11-16</p> <p>Attends a secondary school which is their nearest suitable school, and they live over three miles from the school or there is no available walking route exists.</p>	<p>Free home-to-school transport is provided.</p> <p>Free transport is provided to the siblings of pupils who previously had protection under the former Learner Travel Policy of eligibility for free transport over two miles from home to their nearest suitable school.</p>	<p>Removal of the 'sibling rule' so all pupils are equally eligible (that is, where they live over three miles from their nearest suitable school).</p>

School transport for primary school pupils		
Learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
<p>Primary school pupil (English-medium, Welsh-medium, and faith-based education)</p> <p>Age 5-11</p> <p>Attends a primary school which is their nearest suitable school, and they live over two miles from the school or no available walking route exists.</p>	<p>Home-to-school transport is provided.</p> <p>Free transport is provided to the siblings of pupils who previously had protection under the former Learner Travel Policy of eligibility for free transport over 1.5 miles from home to their nearest suitable school.</p>	<p>Removal of the 'sibling rule' so all pupils are equally eligible (that is, where they live over 2 miles from their nearest suitable school).</p>

Transport for Nursery pupils		
Learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
<p>Nursery pupil (English-medium)</p> <p>Age 3-4</p> <p>Attends nursery school which is their nearest suitable school, and they live over 1.5 miles from the school or no available walking route exists.</p>	<p>Home-to-school transport is provided.</p>	<p>No home-to-school transport provided.</p>
<p>Nursery pupil (Welsh-medium and faith-based education)</p> <p>Age 3-4</p>	<p>Home-to-school transport is provided.</p>	<p>No change.</p>

Transport for Nursery pupils

Learner type	Current arrangement	Proposed arrangement (from September 2025)
Attends nursery school which is their nearest suitable school, and they live over 1.5 miles from the school or no available walking route exists.		