

Meeting of:	SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2
Date of Meeting:	17 JANUARY 2025
Report Title:	ASSISTED TRANSPORT POLICY CONSULTATION
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CLAIRE MARCHANT CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING
Responsible Officer:	JOE BOYLE POLICY OFFICER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	This report sets out the findings and suggested amendments that have been identified through the consultation process for the Assisted Transport Policy through Social Services and Wellbeing. An online consultation was conducted along with sessions with social workers for feedback to be provided. Actions and amendments have been identified which are outlined and proposed below.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 of the outcome of the public consultation in relation to the Authority's Assisted Transport Policy and for the Committee to consider and agree any recommendations it may wish to make to Cabinet when it considers the matter.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 23 July 2024, the draft Assisted Transport Policy (**Appendix 1**) was presented to Cabinet seeking approval to commence a formal consultation process. The consultation went live on 6 August 2024, running for a period of 12 weeks, concluding on 29 October 2024.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 A copy of the consultation documentation is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 The consultation was completed primarily through online means, however people we support that may have been affected were also notified of this consultation through their Social Worker. The offer of in-person discussions was provided and available throughout the consultation if requested, with the option to facilitate larger

group feedback discussion sessions available, should requests have necessitated the facilitation of these. Communications were also prepared and published making the wider public aware of this consultation.

- 3.3 People First Bridgend, the advocacy provider for Bridgend, were contacted and invited to respond to the consultation and/or organise a meeting to discuss the content of the proposed policy. No response was received to communications.
- 3.4 For the online consultation, data shows that there were 224 total visits to the consultation page, resulting in 196 visitors being aware of what the consultation sets out to do. 84 of these visitors were subsequently classed as informed, 62 people visited the feedback form, with only 8 individuals completing and providing a response to the consultation.
- 3.5 Of the individuals that provided an online response, 3 were service users, 3 were carers for individuals, 1 stated other, and 1 chose to skip this question.
- 3.6 Where individuals were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposed policy, there was a significantly mixed response. 1 individual strongly agreed with the proposal, 2 neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 tended to disagree, 1 strongly disagreed, and 2 did not know what the impact of the policy would provide.
- 3.7 Based on current arrangements, 62.5% (5) of respondents felt that it was currently fairly or very difficult to get information about travel arrangements, with only 1 respondent stating it was easy to do so currently.
- 3.8 Finally, regarding the online consultation response, 62.5% (5) respondents felt it was fairly and very important that the Council commissioned travel training services to promote independent travel and reduce dependency on transport provision through social services.
- 3.9 Feedback sessions were also held with social workers and managers regarding the content of the policy. Feedback provided from the social workers stated that they felt the implementation and production of this policy was something that is overdue as it will help create a commonality of approach to the provision of transport to and from a service that will meet an individual's assessed need, resulting in greater equality for all. By having this policy implemented, along with a flow chart, it will help improve decision making by improving clarity and a rationale for all decision making regarding the provision of transport.
- 3.10 Additionally, it was also felt that the implementation of this policy, and by assessing an individual's existing strengths in terms of access to transport and/or their ability to travel, it would make more transport available for individuals that truly need it, therefore being a better use of resources, and reducing the impact on services such as Community Transport which, in current situations, requires significant advance booking for the need to be met. It is also anticipated that it will create and promote more independence for individuals in accessing their chosen service on the days and times of their choosing, rather than being restricted to when the transport is available for them.
- 3.11 There were also some concerns that were raised that need to be considered. When factoring any transport provision, requests would need to be the type of transport

needing to be provided and the location of the service that has been organised in order to ensure it would be feasible to access. Decisions and discussions would also be required to take place with individuals already accessing transport around their long-term transportation provision.

- 3.12 A concern was raised regarding where an individual or family has a mobility car, but this vehicle being unable to be utilised due to the driver being at work or used by the family, not the individual it is intended for. In this situation, it would be expected that discussions are held with the family, and they are reminded of the fact that the provision of a mobility car is there to support the individual whom it was applied for, and not the wider family, prior to the provision of any transport.
- 3.13 Due to this fact, conversations have taken place with colleagues from the Education, Early Years and Young People Directorate to ensure there is no crossover and/or conflict between the two policies. An agreed approach has been identified, whereby any requests for transport to and from an educational facility will only be dealt with through this policy for individuals that would potentially be open to Adult Services. Any requests for Children and Young People should be dealt with through the Home to School/College policy. In addition to this, requests will only be approved to provide transport for an individual to an educational facility where it has been identified that attending the facility will meet an identified care and support plan or wellbeing outcome as identified in an individual's Care and Support Plan. Accessing education would not normally be identified as an eligible care and support need under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and so therefore this provision is not about the facilitation of attending an educational setting for further education. It must, and will be only considered, where it can be evidenced to meet the care and support needs, wellbeing outcomes, and/or have a positive long-term effect upon the individual by accessing this education reducing the likelihood of the individual requiring further long-term social services input and resource.
- 3.14 As previously mentioned, the impact of travel training programmes will be sizeable in reducing the number of people who require long term transport to a service to meet an assessed need. Queries have been raised as to how and who may provide this service and training for individuals, which is yet to be confirmed, but a pilot programme has been identified through the Better Together Board. The 'Better Together Bridgend' group is the learning disability partnership development group lead by People First. This group will be developing a formal training plan.
- 3.15 In addition to this, consideration is being given as to the method by which individuals may be able to pool financial resources to fund transportation methods. Further work would be required to identify the suitability and practicalities of this process. Initial discussions have been held on this matter and following consultation this work will progress.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening has identified that there would be no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh Language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Act provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with 5 ways of working to guide how public services should work to deliver for people. The following is a summary to show how the 5 ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report.

Involvement	In the formation of this report, relevant officers from the directorate have been involved, along with data collated from the consultation which has been provided from residents of the county borough.
Long term	This report sets out the intentions for the longer-term implementation of the Assisted Transport Policy. This policy aims to identify the best way to support an individual in accessing the service that has been identified to meet their care and support needs or wellbeing outcomes, and possibly also reduce the long term need for transport involvement from the Social Services and Wellbeing directorate.
Prevention	The aim of this policy is to prevent incorrect and unsuitable use of financial resources to ensure that those that need them most have access to them, and that transport is provided to those that need it the most in the most suitable way possible.
Integration	This policy will be utilised and integrated across Social Services and Wellbeing teams, ensuring that transport is provided to those that require it and do not have access to an appropriate alternative provision.
Collaboration	Relevant members of the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate (SSWB) directorate will be involved in future discussions regarding the provision of transport to a service to meet an assessed need or wellbeing outcome.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 Through the implementation of this policy, there is hoped to be a positive beneficial impact upon Climate Change as it may reduce the number of commissioned vehicles that are provided for transport in addition to methods already available to an individual in order to access the service assessed to meet their care and support needs or wellbeing outcomes. This is in line with the Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) focus on and understanding of the importance of decarbonisation to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 BCBC policy is to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people, and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services. As such when undertaking an evaluation around an individual's needs toward transport to a service which will meet an assessed need or wellbeing outcome, consideration will be given towards ensuring and promoting the safety of individuals at risk. This proposed policy does not replace or place limitations upon what services an individual may access to meet their care and support needs, it is solely focused upon ensuring the most appropriate method of transport to and from the service is utilised.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, it is still anticipated that there will be some positive impact upon directorate finances by ensuring transport is only provided when and where needed to individuals and other suitable transport is not available. There may be costs for the provision of any travel training that is identified as being required to support individuals to access their care and support service in the most independent and enabled way possible. The costs associated for such travel training have not yet been finalised, however will be met through existing SSWB budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the content of this report and the outcomes from the consultation (**Appendix 2**) and consider any recommendations the Committee may wish to make to Cabinet which are consistent with their challenge and support role in light of the proposals and the consultation responses.

Background documents

None