

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	8 APRIL 2025
Report Title:	ASSISTED TRANSPORT POLICY
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 seeks approval for the Assisted Transport Policy and sets out the findings and suggested amendments that have been identified through the formal consultation process. An online consultation was conducted along with sessions with social workers for feedback to be provided. Actions and amendments have been made to the policy in line with feedback received during the consultation.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet approval of the Social Services and Wellbeing Assisted Transport Policy (**Appendix 1**).

2. Background

- 2.1 On 23 July 2024, the draft Assisted Transport Policy 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.
- 2.2 On 17 January 2025, the Consultation process and report was presented to the Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2 (SOSC 2) for discussion and consideration. Recommendations were made by the Committee which are discussed in section 3 of this report.
- 2.3 The report presented to SOSC 2 detailed the process that was undertaken regarding the full consultation that was conducted, findings and feedback provided, and proposed changes to the policy content. The report detailed discussions and work undertaken to ensure there is no cross-over and conflict with any other Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) policies, particularly the Home to School/College Transport policy.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 The proposed Assisted Transport Policy is attached as **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2 The policy sets out to provide the BCBC approach towards the provision of transport to support an individual to access a service that meets an assessed care and support need or wellbeing outcome. The policy does not cover or change eligibility criteria for a service to meet an assessed care and support need or wellbeing outcome, but purely focuses on the transport needs of the individual to access that service. The policy sets out how the provision of assisted transport from the Authority should be the final option to be utilised in ensuring an individual is able to access the identified service to meet the need or outcome, including use of family, public and/or community-based transport options. The policy provides guidance to staff when considering the need for transport to access a service that meets the identified need or outcome to support in ensuring that the utilisation of transport provision is able to be prioritised to those that need it most.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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 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.
- 3.9 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.

- 3.10 Some concerns were also raised during the consultation process which have been required to be addressed within the policy. These have been presented in the following table.

Concern raised	Amendment made
What happens if the transport identified is not sufficient, due to poor links in the valleys for example.	The transport method being considered must be appropriate to the individual considering all factors including location of both the individual and the service they are accessing to ensure that it is a reasonable expectation for the individual to be able to access the service through this method of transport. Discussions will take place regarding public transport, its frequency and reliability for all individuals, but especially in more remote areas of the county borough.
What will the impact be upon individuals who have a mobility car, but the driver of the vehicle is unavailable.	All transport factors will be taken into account, including viability of the mobility car. Discussions will take place with the family to discuss this, including reminders about the mobility car being provided for the individual not the family, and to identify methods of support to facilitate this prior to the provision of transport.
Will this policy impact upon young people accessing education.	Cross-directorate discussions have taken place to ensure there is no overlaps regarding the Home to School/College Policy. All transport to education for young people is covered under the Home to School/College policy. Transport will only be provided under the Assisted Transport policy to and/or from a service that has been identified to meet an assessed care and support need or wellbeing outcome. This could be an educational centre, but the need for transport will arise from meeting a care and support need or wellbeing outcome, not an educational need.

- 3.11 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 this policy and the Home to School/College Transport policy. Any requests for Children and Young People should be dealt with through the Home to School/College

policy. Requests will only be approved under the Assisted Transport Policy 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.

3.12 Where travel training is required for an individual in order to support them to access the service identified to meet the individual's care and support needs or wellbeing outcomes, this will either be provided by staff internally, or an appropriate service will be procured where required using existing service budgets.

3.13 Following the presentation of the report to SOSC 2, three recommendations were made by the committee as set out below.

Recommendation	Action
The implementation timescale for this policy needs to be clearer.	It is intended that this policy will be implemented on 1 st May 2025 subject to it being approved by Cabinet.
People First Bridgend were to be recontacted for involvement and input into the consultation process	This has been completed and findings are set out below.
The policy should be included in the Forward Work Plan for further monitoring and reflection.	The policy will be scheduled for a SOSC 2 meeting in early 2026.

3.14 Following recommendations from SOSC 2, in order for the Adults Services Advocacy provider to be involved in the consultation process, People First Bridgend were engaged with the aim for them to provide comment and be included in the consultation process. Feedback was provided in both the form of responses to the consultation, along with some general feedback which has been considered and incorporated into the policy where relevant and required. 9 individuals (8 service users and 1 staff member) provided responses to the consultation and a breakdown of these responses are as follows.

3.15 There was a mixed response to all questions from People First Bridgend respondents. Regarding ease of accessing information about help with travel, 45% (4) stated it was very difficult, 33% (3) did not know and 22% (2) found it fairly easy to access information to help. Uncertainty was found as to whether they agreed with the implementation of this policy with 45% not knowing, 33% strongly disagreeing, and 11% both strongly agreeing and tending to agree. Responses remained uncertain and mixed as to the impact upon the social care sector by the implementation of this policy, with 45% stating don't know, 33% saying negative, and 22% stating a positive impact. However, there was a much more consistent response

towards the impact and necessity of travel training with 67% (6) respondents feeling this was very important, with the remaining 33% being unsure.

3.16 Respondents through People First Bridgend also provided comments relating to specifics concerning the policy as follows:

- Would there be any funding requirements for additional staff requirements where needed to support with accessing transport.
- There is a need to ensure the appropriate use of travel training and not just a blanket approach and implementation as this may not be appropriate to all.
- Concerns were raised about ensuring individual circumstances being considered including their ability, or lack of, to access other modes of transport due to factors such as personal health or quality of transport given current cuts to public transport services in certain areas of the county borough.
- Comments were raised about it being difficult to get companion bus passes which can impact upon individual's ability to be more independent which can create more reliance and need for transport support.

It was also noted and felt by one respondent that this policy would provide a positive impact by ensuring that funds and assisted transport were available to those that needed it most, rather than being widely used and potentially unavailable for someone with the most need.

3.17 People First Bridgend also provided additional information with regard to frequently mentioned concerns and issues that may be relevant to this policy area which are as follows:

Concern raised	Solution in Policy
There isn't enough public transport, particularly in the Bridgend Valleys which makes independent travel very difficult. Without the community transport bus, many people in the Valleys would be very isolated and would be unable to attend their community activities / work placements etc.	Guidance is provided at section 7 of the policy for practitioners completing any transport needs assessments/ considerations ensuring that when identifying the need relating to travel and whether transport is needed to be provided, consideration must be given to the availability and appropriateness of relevant public transport for the individual, including a consideration relating to where the individual lives.
There are issues with public transport: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public transport is very unreliable - e.g. late or cancelled trains and busses. • People often do not feel safe on public transport, particularly when it is dark/evening time. • Bus timetables are not accessible/easy to understand. 	Only where identified as being appropriate for an individual to use public transport, will it be chosen as the appropriate travel method. This process will take into account the individualised factors relating to the person's location, suitability and reliability of public transport in that area, along with the individual's ability to access public transport safely. The individuals will be safeguarded through this process to ensure that no individual will be put in or

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some people have not had good experiences on public transport, e.g. rude members of the public and rude bus staff. • Public transport is not always accessible - e.g. not enough disabled seats on buses, lifts being broken at train stations meaning people cannot get to the platform. • It can be difficult purchasing a train ticket if you do not know how to use the ticket machines and if you do not have a bank card. Sometimes there isn't staff on the train to purchase a ticket from, meaning that people get to their destination and are stuck at the barrier because they have not purchased a ticket. • It is difficult to rely on transport provided by family and staff as not all staff drive, there are staff shortages, and it can be a strain for family members. 	<p>expected to undertake an activity that places them at risk and in situations they cannot deal with. Individuals will be enabled to access public transport through a travel training programme which will support them with understanding public transport timetables and creating positive experiences with public transport where necessary. Accessibility of the considered method of travel will be considered throughout the process to ensure it can be accessed by the individual, including that they are able and know how to buy a ticket appropriately.</p> <p>Where an individual is supported by residential staff, transport to and from additional services will be facilitated by that service. As a part of the discussions and considerations, viability and suitability of family members providing the transport option will be looked at. It is not a given that it will be expected to be completed by the family member, individual circumstances will be looked at.</p>
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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.

As identified in the EIA Screening form the policy will be in effect for all individuals that are accessing a service to meet an assessed need. This policy is to be applied universally to identify all appropriate methods of transport for an individual and does not remove the option of providing funded transport to an individual to meet their assessed need so therefore will have no impact to any group possessing a protected characteristic because of them having that protected characteristic.

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 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 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 direct financial implications arising directly from this report, it is anticipated that there will be some positive impact upon directorate finances by

ensuring that strength-based outcome focused assessments are consistently undertaken and there is a programme of support for individuals to maximise their independence in using transport. There may be some impact following any 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. Costs for this will be met through existing Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approve the Social Services and Wellbeing Assisted Transport Policy (**Appendix 1**) to take effect from 1st May 2025.

Background documents

None