

# Learner Travel Review

## Consultation document

**Date of issue:** 29 September 2014

**Action required:** Responses by 22 December 2014

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## Overview

This consultation is to invite views on potential changes to school pupils' travel to and from school and how any suggested changes to the policy will affect you and your family.

## How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **29 September 2014** and close on the **22 December 2014**.

You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

**Tel:** (01656) 643 664

**Email:** [Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk)

**Online:** [<link to survey>](#)

**Post:** Communications, Marketing and Engagement,  
Bridgend County Borough Council,  
Raven's Court, Wing 3, Brewery Lane,  
Bridgend, CF31 4AP.

Alternative formats are also available upon request.

## Data protection

How we use the views and information you share with us.

All responses received by Bridgend County Borough Council will be seen in full by its staff members involved in the consultation process. The information may also be seen by other departments within the Council or Local Service Board members to help improve upon the services provided.

The Council may also use the information gathered to publish subsequent documents both directly and indirectly linked to this consultation, however the Council will never disclose any personal information such as names or addresses that could identify an individual.

If you do not wish for your opinions to be publicised, please state so in your response.

## Related documents

[Learner Travel \(Wales\) Measure 2008.](#)  
[Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013.](#)

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

**Visit:**

[www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation)

## Background and information

Bridgend County Borough Council is currently facing unprecedented cuts to its budget. The Council currently faces making savings of £36 million in the period 2014-2017.

These cuts mean that the Council must review all of the services that it provides. At present Bridgend County Borough Council has a legal responsibility for making free travel to and from school available for:

- ▶ All children receiving primary education living **two miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school\*;
- ▶ All children receiving secondary education (aged 11-16) living **three miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school\*;
- ▶ All pupils who cannot walk to school because of special education needs, disability or where there are no safe walking routes available, even if the distance is less than the limits highlighted above.

\*The nearest suitable school is usually defined as the pupil's catchment area school.

These requirements are set by Welsh Government as part of the 'Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008'. There are currently no requirements to provide free transport for learners who:

- ▶ are not of statutory school age. This includes nursery aged children as well as post 16 students (i.e. year 12, year 13 or in college);
- ▶ are, by parental choice, attending a Voluntary Aided (VA) or Welsh Medium school (i.e. religious or Welsh schools), where the school is not the nearest suitable school.

## 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. It is considered to be a world first.

The Welsh Government estimates that one in five cars on the road at 8:50am on a weekday is doing 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.

## Current situation

At present, the Council provides the following **above** what is legally required by law by providing free transport to:

- ▶ all children receiving primary education (including 4 year old nursery children who attend school on a fulltime basis) living more than **1.5 miles** from the nearest suitable school\*.
- ▶ all children receiving secondary or post 16 education living more than **2 miles** from the nearest suitable school\*.
- ▶ all learners attending Voluntary Aided or Welsh Medium schools), regardless of whether the school is the nearest suitable school\*.

\*The nearest suitable school is usually defined as their catchment area school.

## 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 currently provided by Bridgend County Borough Council is amongst the most generous to be found in Wales. Hence, council spending is 55% higher than the funds we receive from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Financial savings have already been made in 2014/15 through efficiencies, but if we do not implement these additional changes the Council will need to look elsewhere to make these savings.

The Council has always provided above what is legally required. The proposals suggested aim to provide the right balance between continuing to provide free transport for learners to meet our legal requirements, whilst not having to find additional savings across other frontline services, protecting them from further equivalent cuts.

## The proposals

It is proposed that Bridgend County Borough Council alter its learner travel policy in the following ways:

### Proposal 1

**To increase the distance required for free transport between a pupil's home and their school, to match the distance required by law (including Welsh and religious schools).**

This would mean that from September 2016 the following would apply to the Council's free school transport:-

- ▶ Pupils in primary schools living **2 miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.
  - (N.B The current provision for primary schools is 1.5 miles.)
- ▶ Pupils in secondary (comprehensive) schools living **3 miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.
  - (N.B The current provision for secondary schools is 2 miles.)
- ▶ Pupils in religious and Welsh language schools living **2 miles** or further for primary schools and **3 miles** or further for secondary schools would receive free transport **regardless** of whether the school is the nearest suitable school.
- ▶ Only when a child begins school full-time or changes their school, will the new change apply.
- ▶ If a child is already in receipt of free home to school transport at a school and their brother or sister starts their full-time education at that school whilst their brother or sister is there, they too will receive free transport until they also change school.

## Proposal 2

### To charge the full cost of a school bus pass for pupils who do not receive free school transport.

The current charge for a school bus pass is £270 per financial year (or £1.42 per day). This is below the actual cost of a seat that the Council has to pay, as shown in the table below.

<b>The actual cost of a paying place on Council school buses 2013-14</b>	<b>Primary school</b>	<b>Secondary school</b>
The Council's school transport cost for a school pupil per financial year	£756.41	£646.98
The total number of school days available from 1 April to 31 March for school pupils	190	190
<b>The Council's cost per day for each school pupil</b>	<b>£3.98</b>	<b>£3.41</b>

It is no longer financially viable to offer the service at the current rate. However, the Council believes that it is in the best interest of pupils to be offered paid places on our school buses, and that the service although important, should be provided at its actual cost.

Any savings such as cost reductions as a result of the new service contracts between the Council and service operators (i.e., bus companies) would reduce the charges highlighted above in line with the actual cost of the service.



### Proposal 3

#### **To stop providing free transport for learners aged 16 or over, who go to school or college.**

This proposal applies equally to pupils and students continuing into sixth form or further education (see appendix 2.0).

As part of this proposal there are opportunities to offer places on school buses at full or partial cost, as well as supporting learners who may need financial support such as offering a 'hardship fund'.

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

### Impact of the proposals

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening will be completed ready for when the consultation is live and will be reviewed following conclusion of this consultation (appendix 3.0).

The proposals all provide equality between voluntary aided, Welsh language and mainstream schools which will lower the likelihood of any discrimination.

The consultation also asks how the Council can reasonably support individuals and families should the proposals be introduced.

## The consultation process

Projected timetable for procedure and proposal implementation

Activity	Date
Response deadline	22 December 2014
Final report published	19 March 2015
Report to Cabinet on the outcomes of the consultation	26 March 2015
Potential implementation	1 September 2016

The outcomes of the consultation (which will be incorporated into the proposal to the report where possible) 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 2016.

## How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **29 September 2014** and close on the **22 December 2014**. You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

**Visit:** Our community engagement workshops:

Venue	Date	Time
Bridgend College	TBC	18:00
Porthcawl Comprehensive	TBC	18:00
Pencoed Comprehensive	TBC	18:00
Coleg Y Dderwen	TBC	18:00
Maesteg Comprehensive	TBC	18:00
Archbishop Mcgrath	TBC	18:00

**Post:** Communications, Marketing and Engagement,  
Bridgend County Borough Council,  
Raven's Court, Wing 3,  
Brewery Lane, Bridgend, CF31 4AP

**Tel:** (01656) 643 664

**Email:** [Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk)

**Online:** [<survey link>](#)

Alternative formats are also available upon request.

## Appendix

### Appendix 1.0 – School / college transport statistics 2011/12

#### School / College Transport Statistics 2011/12

<u>Bridgend CBC</u> <u>IBA Local Government Settlement 2011/12</u>	<u>£'000</u>	<u>Bridgend CBC</u> <u>Expenditure by Service 2011/12</u>	<u>£'000</u>	<u>Additional Spend</u> <u>over Settlement</u>
Nursery and Primary school transport services	931	Home to school transport: nursery schools	0	
		Home to school transport: primary schools	1,015	
	<u>931</u>		<u>1,015</u>	9.02%
Secondary school transport services	1,898	Home to school transport: secondary schools	2,594	
		Home to school transport: special schools	975	
	<u>1,898</u>		<u>3,569</u>	88.04%
Adult and continuing education transport	<u>360</u>	Home to college transport	<u>366</u>	1.67%
<b>TOTAL Bridgend spend</b>	<b>3,189</b>		<b>4,950</b>	<b>55.22%</b>
<u><b>Total Unitary Authorities IBA SSA 2011/12</b></u>	<u><b>£'000</b></u>	<u><b>Total Unitary Authorities Expenditure 2011/12</b></u>	<u><b>£'000</b></u>	
Nursery and Primary school transport services	25,037	Home to school transport: nursery schools	9	
		Home to school transport: primary schools	24,394	
	<u>25,037</u>		<u>24,403</u>	-2.53%
Secondary school transport services	54,606	Home to school transport: secondary schools	54,744	
		Home to school transport: special schools	25,548	
	<u>54,606</u>		<u>80,292</u>	47.04%
Adult and continuing education transport	<u>8,689</u>	Home to college transport	<u>8,755</u>	0.76%
<b>TOTAL Wales spend</b>	<b>88,332</b>		<b>113,450</b>	<b>28.44%</b>

## Appendix 2.0 – Post 16 data

There are currently 2,654 entitled to free school transport as post 16 learners: 2,004 attend schools, 650 attend colleges.

School	No of post 16 learners receiving school transport
Archbishop McGrath	170
Brynteg	434
Bryntirion	181
Y Dderwen	213
Cynffig	110
Héronsbridge	59
Maesteg	207
Pencoed	153
Porthcawl	349
YBC	47
YGG Llangynwyd	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>2004</b>

## Appendix 3.0 - Equality Impact Assessments (EIA).

Initial screening to be completed by 29 September 2014.

Full EIA to be completed after 19 March 2015.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## About you

**Q1** Your name:

**Q2** Organisation / school (if applicable):

**Q3** Email address:

**Q4** Please tick the option(s) that best describes you as a respondent? Please tick all that apply

Parent/carer

Charity/voluntary organisation

School worker

Student

Head teacher

Police force

Bus or taxi driver

School governor

Other (describe below)

Pupil (primary)

Pupil (secondary)

**Q5** How do you or your child(ren) currently travel to school? Please tick all that apply.

Walk	<input type="checkbox"/>	School bus (free)	<input type="checkbox"/>	School bus (paid place)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cycle	<input type="checkbox"/>	Public bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taxi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Car	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q6** Please tick the option(s) that best describes you or your child(ren) as pupils/students? Please tick all that apply.

College student	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary school sixth form pupil (Year 12 – year 13)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Secondary school pupil (year 7 to year 11)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

## Proposal 1

**To increase the distance a pupil lives from their school in order to receive free school transport, to the distance required by law (also applies to Welsh Medium and Voluntary Aided schools.)**

This would mean that from September 2016 the following would apply to the Council's free school transport:-

- Pupils in primary schools living **2 miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.

(**N.B** The current provision is **1.5 miles.**)

- Pupils in secondary (comprehensive) schools living **3 miles** or further from home to their nearest suitable school would receive free transport.

(**N.B** The current provision is **2 miles.**)

- Pupils in religious and Welsh language schools living **2 miles** or further for primary schools and **3 miles** or further for secondary schools would receive free transport **regardless** of whether the school is the nearest suitable school.
- Only when a child begins school full-time or changes their school, will the change apply.
- If a child is already in receipt of free home to school transport at a school and their brother or sister starts their full-time education at that school whilst they are there, they too will receive free transport until they also change school.

**Q7** If proposal 1 was introduced, what would be the impact on you or your family? (Consider what the Council might reasonably do to help)

## Proposal 2

### Charge the full cost of seats on school bus pass for pupils who do not receive free school transport.

The current charge per day for a seat on a school bus is **£1.42** which is well below the actual cost of a seat which at present is:-

**£3.98** for primary school transport

**£3.41** for secondary school transport

The charges above would alter in line with the cost of the service per year. These would likely reduce as the Council renews its contracts with service providers.

**Q8** If proposal 2 was introduced, what would be the impact on you or your family? (Consider what the Council might reasonably do to help)



## Proposal 3

### Stop providing free transportation for learners aged 16 or over, who go to school or college.

There is no law that says the Council needs to provide free transport for 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 now rely on this free service to support their learning.

Therefore, the Council would also like your views on how, if the proposal was put in place, might we minimise the impact on these learners. For example, this may include the Council starting a 'hardship fund' or the opportunity to offer places at full or partial cost.

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.

**Q9** If proposal 3 was introduced, what would be the impact on you or your family?  
(Consider what the Council might reasonably do to help)

**Q10** Are there any groups of learners aged 16 or over who you believe should continue to receive free transport?

For example, these might include:-

- young people in care
- care leavers
- those on certain benefits
- disabled young people
- Those considered at risk of becoming NEET i.e., not in education, employment or training.

## General questions

Bridgend has an expanding network of routes to encourage more people to walk and cycle more often and to become more active.

The network includes routes in urban areas aimed at encouraging walking and cycling as alternatives to using the car, 'safe routes in communities' schemes to encourage walking and cycling for local journeys, and leisure routes, such as the National Cycle Network and local community routes.

**Q11** What changes could the Council reasonably make to encourage pupils and students to walk or cycle more often to and from school or college?