

SUBJECT:	Proposed Home to School Transport Policy 2024/25
MEETING:	Cabinet
DATE:	6th September 2023
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out the legal responsibilities for the provision of school transport. The legislation places a duty on local authorities to review their transport policy on an annual basis. The Transport Policy needs to be confirmed by the 1st October for application in the following academic year.
- 1.2 The draft policy has been the subject of public consultation and scrutiny consideration and has been amended to reflect the feedback received. The purpose of this report is to consider the proposed Transport Policy for 24-25 and determine whether to consider its adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the proposed Transport Policy 24-25 contained in Appendix 2, is agreed and the policy is published on or before 1st October 2023 in accordance with the requirements of the Learner Travel Measure.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The provision of home to school transport is prescribed by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure, 2008. The legislation imposes statutory duties on local authorities in the provision of home to school transport and the circumstances when transport must be provided. It also places a duty on all local authorities to undertake an annual review of the transport policy and confirm how statutory and discretionary policies are being applied. The transport policy should be agreed prior to the 1st October for application in the proceeding academic year.
- 3.2 A draft Transport Policy was presented to Cabinet in May of this year and public consultation was undertaken between 31st May and 29th June. There was a press release at the commencement of the consultation and there have been regular social media posts during its duration. In addition, all schools were provided with information on the consultation at the start of the process and were also asked to remind parents a week before the consultation closed. The Commissioning Team also contacted the parents and carers of existing users of the service to make them aware of the consultation.

3.3 A summary of the public consultation responses has been included in Appendix 1 and can be broken down into five themes, which are considered in detail below.

Free Transport for Faith Learners

3.3.1 We received feedback from survey respondents and representatives of faith schools that the proposed drafting in the home to school transport policy was too narrow and was contradictory to the proposals outlined in the consultation. In addition, we have also received correspondence from Cytun Cymru and a parent challenging the amended drafting and instead proposing that the eligibility criteria for faith schools should be amended to include “the learner’s application having been made on grounds of faith or conscience”. They have also proposed that when determining nearest suitable, this should be based on the denomination selected by the learners parents, whether or not they practice the said denominational faith; that siblings of learners who are already in receipt of free transport to a faith school will be presumed to have applied to the same school on the grounds of faith or conscience unless the contrary is proved and that confirmation of an admission to a faith school on the grounds of faith or conscience should only be sought once for each learner.

Response

The provision of free home to school transport to faith schools is not a statutory responsibility, but Local Authorities can choose to provide discretionary transport based on their defined eligibility criteria. In addition, the Learner Travel Measure is clear that where parental preference is applied and they choose to send their children to a school which is not their nearest suitable, they lose their statutory entitlement to free home to school transport. The proposed amendments to the eligibility criteria for learners attending faith schools is designed to ensure that discretionary free transport continues to be made available for those learners who meet the distance eligibility criteria and the learner being able to meet the faith criteria contained in their chosen school’s oversubscription criteria. If however a parent has applied parental preference and selected the school for non-faith reasons they will not be able to access free home to school transport, unless the school is either their nearest suitable or catchment school.

We note the proposal that the eligibility criteria should be amended to include conscience, we do not however recommend the adoption of this proposal given that there is no objective mechanism to assess “conscience”. Welsh Government officials have confirmed that as there is no statutory responsibility for Monmouthshire to provide free transport to faith schools, it is a matter for Monmouthshire to determine how they define the eligibility criteria for discretionary transport. We would not propose to withdraw transport from any learners who are already in receipt of discretionary free transport unless their circumstances change, e.g., they apply to change schools or they move home.

We note that Cytun Cymru has raised concerns that faith schools may not consider faith as a criterion unless they are oversubscribed. We acknowledge that not all applicants to faith schools may be automatically evaluated against faith criteria and the drafting has been amended to reference that the application for transport will be assessed against the learner being able to meet the faith criteria contained in their chosen school’s

oversubscription criteria. The Commissioning Team may consult with schools to confirm that learners can meet the said faith criteria.

Scrutiny Committee were reassured that those already in receipt of transport would not be impacted and that those who choose to attend a faith school for faith reasons will not be impacted by the proposal.

Public Transport

3.3.2 One of the key changes proposed is to increase the use of public transport for secondary learners. The policy proposes to do this by aligning with Welsh Government's Llwybr Newydd Transport Strategy and adopting the transport hierarchy. We have received feedback opposing this approach which is largely summarised as follows:

- Safeguarding concerns as learners will be sharing the vehicles with passengers who do not have a DBS.
- The reliability and punctuality of service vehicles.
- Concerns that parents would feel the need to travel with their children as the transport is not dedicated school transport.
- The impact on working parents.
- Increased stress levels for parents and learners

Response

The Council has and continues to use public bus services for secondary learners. The same protocols that govern safeguarding equally apply on public service vehicles and drivers have a DBS. We acknowledge that traffic conditions can impact on the punctuality of buses, but this equally applies to home to school transport. Service operators have been contacted and they have worked with Monmouthshire's officers to amend service timetables to ensure that learners are dropped off and collected at schools at the correct times. We will not issue parents with bus passes to travel with their children as the Learner Travel Measure assumes that only primary aged learners will need to be accompanied by a responsible officer and we will not be using public transport for primary aged learners.

Our experience to date is that travelling on public services does not increase the risk of safeguarding incidents, although we appreciate that parents and carers may hold that perception. We will work closely with operators to monitor the behaviour of passengers and review safeguarding measures and transport methods where substantiated concerns arise. This policy supports the reduction in home to school commissioned transport and the maintenance of public services within Monmouthshire. It aligns with Welsh Government's transport policies and the Corporate and Community plan.

Scrutiny Committee raised a number of issues, including the need to ensure that all public bus drivers have a DBS, preferably a Monmouthshire DBS, that they comply with the Learner Travel Measure which includes seat belts and driver training, and that CCTV is used on the vehicles and used to investigate safeguarding incidents, particularly as members of the public may also be travelling on the vehicles. All public service vehicles need to comply with prescribed legislation to ensure the safety of their passengers. Scrutiny Committee were advised that of the 23 reported safeguarding incidents for the

academic year 22/23, only 1 related to learners who were allocated season tickets on public buses.

Post 16 Travel

- 3.3.3 Respondents have requested that Post 16 travel should be free and available to all of those that require it. They are concerned that the lack of guaranteed Post 16 travel has a detrimental impact on those living in rural locations and those choosing to access Welsh medium education.

Response

We fully understand the concerns that have been expressed by respondents regarding the uncertainty of Post 16 travel. We appreciate that this uncertainty is a particular problem for Welsh and Faith learners who need to travel out of County and there are no direct public service bus routes. As a result, if parents apply for Post 16 concessionary travel for Welsh medium or faith learners who are attending their nearest suitable school we will ensure that they are able to access home to school transport.

Schools Suitability

- 3.3.4 The consultation proposed the removal of the consideration of a school's special measures status when determining a learners nearest school. This currently only applies to learners who live in the Gilwern area whose nearest school is Brynmawr and their catchment school is King Henry VIII. Responses have objected to the proposed change and have cited concerns that the proposal does not consider feeder school status; it deprives parents of choice; is anti-competitive; does not consider community cohesion and acts as a dis-incentive to schools to strive for better Estyn reports.

Response

The Learner Travel Measure places a duty on Local Authorities to provide home to school transport to a learners nearest suitable school. There is no definition on suitable and this is instead left to the Local Authority to determine. The legislation does not impose any requirement for a Local Authority to consider feeder school status, community cohesion or the Estyn status of a school when determining a learners nearest suitable school. Monmouthshire already exceeds the statutory requirements by offering free transport to both the nearest and catchment school where they are not the same. The policy change would therefore provide clarity that the Commissioning Team will not assess the educational performance of a school when awarding transport and instead only consider the distance criteria, if it is a state funded school and if there are any specific individual circumstances, e.g., a request for Welsh medium or faith-based education.

Available Walking Routes and Pick Up Points

- 3.3.5 We have received feedback challenging the requirement to walk to a pickup point and the wider assessment of available walking routes. In particular it has been suggested that the assessment should have more regard for local views of the safety of roads and that there should be an on-going assessment to reflect any changes in circumstances. Concern was also expressed over the proposal to reduce the notice period to one term when transport is being withdrawn as an available route has been identified.

Response

We do not consider it unreasonable to require learners to meet transport at a designated pick-up point if there is a walking route available. In circumstances where there is no available walking route, feeder transport will be provided. Risk assessments are undertaken by qualified Highways colleagues, and they follow the assessment process set out in the Learner Travel Measure and other road safety guidance. If parents or carers have a concern with the walking route, they are able to ask for an assessment to be undertaken and we are grateful to those parents who report hazards such as brambles etc so that maintenance works can be undertaken. Assessments are undertaken on the basis that primary aged learners will be accompanied by an appropriate adult, that those walking will behave responsibly, and drivers will comply with the law. The introduction of the reduced 20mph speed limit will also have a positive impact for those learners walking to school.

Scrutiny Committee asked that we consider further the proposal to reduce the notice period for the removal of transport to one academic term. As a result of this feedback, it has been agreed that we will not progress this proposed amendment.

Other issues raised.

- 3.3.6 Respondents queried whether any changes to the Transport Policy would impact on those learners already in receipt of transport. Others questioned whether learners would be required to use more than one vehicle and the impact that this would have on learners and on the viability of schools competing with their English counterparts.

Response

Where learners are already in receipt of free transport, they will continue to receive transport unless an available walking route is made available. The Council is not proposing that learners will be asked to travel on two public service buses to travel to and from school. We do provide feeder transport for those learners who do not have an available route to a pick-up point and in those cases, we will continue to provide feeder transport.

- 3.3.7 Respondents were asked to consider the impact of the proposals on the Welsh language. The comments received raise concerns over charging and availability of Post 16 transport, the length of journey times and the ability of learners to communicate in Welsh on transport. As outlined earlier in the report the Council will ensure that there is available concessionary transport for Welsh medium post 16 learners. Routes are assessed to ensure that travel times are no longer than 60 minutes for secondary learners.
- 3.3.8 Officers have considered all the feedback received and proposed amendments to reflect the valuable contributions made by respondents.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

The proposed amendments will not have any negative impacts on corporate parenting. The proposal to apply an eligibility criteria to applications for faith transport will negatively impact on parents who have selected a faith school not for faith reasons if it is not their nearest suitable or catchment school as they will not be able to access free home to school transport. Similarly, parents who have previously accessed free transport to a school which is not their nearest suitable or catchment school due to the special measures status of a school, will lose access to free transport if the proposed policy is adopted.

Conversely, Post 16 learners attending out of County Welsh medium and faith schools will now be guaranteed access to a concessionary seat on home to school transport.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option	Benefits	Dis-benefits	Comments
Leave the Transport Policy as originally drafted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy will fail to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the respondents. The Council will have failed in its duty to consider the consultation responses. 	This option should be discounted as it falls short of the reasonable expectations of consultees and the standards required of an engaged and listening Council
Agree to the amendments proposed following the consultation exercise and review by Scrutiny Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy has reflected on the views expressed by respondents and where reasonable and equitable to do so have made amendments to the drafting. The Council is open in its decision-making and holds true to its values. Respondents can see how their engagement has influenced the Councils decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	It is recommended that this option is progressed.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1 The Transport Policy is evaluated on an annual basis and considers the impact of any legislative or policy changes, financial constraints and learning throughout the year.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure places a requirement on Local Authorities to review their Transport Policy. The proposed policy has been amended to reflect consultation responses and the feedback from Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.2 The proposed policy exceeds the statutory duties placed on Local Authorities but is in line with current policy and practice. Given the current hardship being encountered by many families due to the cost-of-living crisis, it was not considered appropriate to consider the removal of discretionary transport or a reversion to statutory distance criteria at this time.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 The cost of school transport for the financial year 22/23 was circa £6,000,000. This includes the cost of external provision and our in-house transport provider. School contracts for the 23/24 academic year have recently been re-tendered and the costs will increase for the forthcoming academic year.
- 8.2 Should we be successful in transitioning learners onto public bus services there will be a reduction in revenue generated from concessionary income as parents will purchase season tickets directly from the bus operator.
- 8.3 Due the nature of the transport market, the costs can change as contracts are handed back and re-tendered, new routes are added to accommodate new learners and contract uplifts to reflect the increasing cost of transport provision.

9. CONSULTEES:

Cabinet
Monitoring Officer
S151 Officer
Public consultation
People Scrutiny Committee

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2014
Cabinet Report 3rd May 2023
People Scrutiny Report 10th August 2023 and resulting feedback.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Summary of Consultation Responses

1. Do you agree with some or all of the proposed changes:

Positive responses to:

- Retention of travel distances
- Promotion of active travel
- Use of public transport
- Positive approach to climate change & environment
- Maintaining more generous distance thresholds helps to prioritise worker hours and the economy.

2. Do you disagree with some or all of the proposed changes

Faith

- Faith criteria too narrow in the draft document
- Should not be an eligibility requirement for attending faith schools.
- Should retain existing policy and if a faith-based school accepts the learner free transport should be provided.
- Proposed drafting will exclude multiple faith denominations.
- Need to include suitable faith school so that parents can choose to send their children to a different denominational faith school than their nearest one.
- National, European and International Human Rights legislation requires the state to ensure or respect the rights of parents to have children educated in accordance with their religious, moral and philosophical convictions, parents therefore have the right to choose to have their child educated in a mainstream, Catholic or Church in Wales school.
- The faith criteria are only applied by faith schools if they are oversubscribed and the vast majority of children attending faith schools are neither Catholic nor Church in Wales.
- Proposal that the eligibility criteria should be broadened to include conscience.
- Proposal that siblings of children already in a faith school should have automatic transport.
- That applicants for faith education should only be required to meet the eligibility criteria once.

Post 16

- Lack of provision for Post 16

Schools' suitability

- Object to the removal of “special status” when determining a school’s suitability.
- Loss of free transport to send their child to another school outside their catchment area will deprive parents of choice, be anti-competitive and be a dis-incentive for schools to strive for better Estyn reports.
- The proposed change has not been fully considered/ assessed and not justified and should therefore be rejected.
- Need to consider feeder school status as part of the suitable school determination.
- The impact on community cohesion is not considered within the EQIA and therefore this aspect should be re-assessed.

Use of Public Transport

- Do not agree with the use of public transport for primary aged pupils due to safeguarding issues.
- Should provide transport based on the statutory criteria so that all learners across Wales have the same access to transport.
- Concerns over reliability and capacity of public buses
- Don’t want learners on public transport as they would take up all of the vehicle capacity.
- Public buses create a safeguarding risk.
- Season tickets should be able to be used outside of school travel.
- Public transport passengers (non-learners) will not be DBS checked.
- Parents may not be able to work due to the journey being both uncertain and too long.
- Parents should be provided with bus passes to accompany their children on public transport.
- Reduced availability of concessionary seats.
- Financial support for public bus services no longer needed.
- Should risk assess for learner safety.
- Buses should be partitioned to separate learners from non-DBS passengers.
- Schedules need to be 100% reliable to avoid a drop in attendance.
- Should risk assess for knife based mental health/terrorism type scenarios as well as the societal surge in drug/alcohol related violence.
- Public buses do not run at suitable times for learners, which may mean that some will have to pay for breakfast club. The inflexibility will mean that some will have to give up work which would result in a loss of working hours to the economy.

- Public buses are unsafe, and their unreliability causes unreasonable levels of stress and long journey times for learners.
- Parents would have to travel with U14's as this age group is particularly vulnerable to grooming and assault by members of the public who are not DBS checked.
- Lack of bus shelters would be detrimental to the health of learners waiting for buses.
- All buses should have a chaperone.
- Should not be using funds for essential school buses to support public buses.

Available Walking Routes

- Do not agree that learners should have to walk to a pickup point.
- Should not disregard the length of private roads and driveways when assessing distances.
- Learners should not be asked to walk to pick up points if there are no safe walking routes.
- Learners should be given free transport if there are no zebra crossings on their walking route.
- Designate more safe walking routes to reduce requirement for transport.
- One terms notice of an available walking route and the loss of free transport is too short.
- Learners should not be obligated to walk on wet pavements in lightning storms.
- Transport should only be withdrawn if it will not cause hardship.
- Walking routes should be continually reviewed and a telephone number made available for parents to report issues such as overgrown brambles or if a route becomes socially dangerous.

Other

- Buses should have chaperones.
- Should be providing access to bicycles and cycle proficiency courses and safe storage at schools.
- Schools should introduce walking buses and signpost where lollipop staff are located.
- Should not be providing free transport for Welsh language learners.
- All learners should have access to free transport.
- Would like additional pick-ups for after school clubs.
- Should allow free transport for learners who have to move schools as a result of bullying.
- Public transport needs to be more affordable and accessible.
- If a catchment review results in changes all learners already accessing the free transport should continue to do so

- Council must support working parents by providing free home to school transport.
- Should be a review of Glascoed catchment.
- Should not increase journey times for faith, Welsh medium and special education settings.
- Taking more than one bus to school is unreasonable as increases the risk of learners being stranded and vulnerable if the second one is cancelled/delayed and increases journey times.
- If a family has two children and they have to travel on separate transport, parents cannot be in two places at one to drop off / pick up children from two different places.
- The proposed policy changes will increase vehicular movements and impact negatively on climate change.
- Negatively impacts on parents who cannot drive; therefore, they should have dedicated free school buses.
- Lack of free school transport may impact the viability of Faith and mainstream schools, particularly when they compete with English schools.
- Unfair to provide free transport for Welsh medium learners and not Faith learners.
- Should use the same vehicles to transport primary and secondary pupils.
- Need to ensure that budget is made available to maintain active travel routes and a risk assessment and any works required completed before September 2024.
- Not clear if the proposed changes will impact existing users of home to school transport.

Q3 Are you a current user of transport (online survey respondents only)

Yes: 59

No: 29

Q4 Do the proposed changes impact on the Welsh Language

- Long journey times impact on travel
- Learners should be able to communicate in Welsh on the vehicle.
- Drivers should be able to speak Welsh.
- Charging for Post 16 travel to Welsh medium schools is discriminatory as there isn't one in the county.
- Lack of convenient transport to mainstream schools where Welsh is taught will result in parents exercising parental preference and choosing a school in England.
- Providing families with free Home-to-School Transport to Welsh medium schools and removing it from families whose own religious or philosophical

convictions require them to send their children to faith schools would appear to be discrimination, and therefore not community building, in a county where the lives of many inherently straddle both country borders. Arguably, the value of learning the Welsh language is also diminished without the building up of a moral compass to use it wisely!

Q5 How can the proposals be improved to have a positive impact on the Welsh Language

- More dual language signs on bus transport
- Bilingual staff
- Retain the existing Faith policy criteria where the Welsh language is taught.
- Interest in Welsh and the art of learning EU and international languages in general, could be fostered by asking learners to greet Home-to-School contract drivers perhaps in Chinese on 'Mandarin Mondays', German on Tuesdays, the indigenous language on 'Welsh Wednesdays', Italian or Spanish on Thursdays, and 'Francais on Fridays'. Learners could be encouraged to play 'I Spy' in the language of the day enroute? This could serve as a fun game, and mental distraction e.g., from bus bullying due to boredom etc? While awaiting bus collection, again, learners could play 'I Spy' in the language of the day with their parents/guardians. ...It would certainly make a change from more usual number plate games etc and encourage enhanced engagement from parents/guardians as well.
- Greetings etc should be undertaken in Welsh.

Appendix 2 – Proposed Transport Policy

Monmouthshire County Council - Home to School Transport Policy 23/24

Introduction

This document sets out Monmouthshire County Councils (MCC) statutory duties to provide free home to school transport for children who live within the Monmouthshire County boundaries. If you do not pay council tax to MCC, please contact your Local Authority to find out how to apply for their home to school transport.

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure (2008), places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide free home to school transport if certain eligibility criteria are met. Monmouthshire County Council has developed its transport guidance in accordance with this legislation to enable it to meet its statutory duties for learners up to and including year 11.

Free transport will only be available where a student fulfils the necessary criteria which will be explained in detail in this policy document. Parents should only apply for free home to school transport if they have read this guidance and ensured themselves that their children meet the criteria thresholds. If you have previously applied for free home to school transport and been refused, please do not reapply unless your personal circumstances have changed, e.g., you have moved to a new house, or your children changed school.

The information given in this guidance relates to the 2024 – 2025 school year. This policy will be reviewed annually in line with the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure.

This Policy will be used to assess new applications for faith transport. For those who are already in receipt of transport their transport will continue unless their circumstances have changed e.g., they have moved house.

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Monmouthshire County Council's Transport Policy

All applications for home to school transport are assessed on an individual basis by the Commissioning Team.

To qualify for free home to school transport a child must attend their nearest suitable state funded or catchment school **and** that school must be over the MCC distance criteria. Free home to school transport will not be provided unless a learner meets both criteria.

Nearest Suitable or Catchment School

The Learner Travel Measure defines nearest suitable school as a school where the 'education or training provided is suitable having regard for the age, ability and aptitudes of the learner and any learning difficulties he or she may have'.

In determining whether a school is suitable it will consider:

- Age appropriateness – relating to attendance at a Primary or Secondary School
- Ability appropriateness – relating to attendance at a mainstream, Welsh medium or faith school.
- Special education requirements – if a learner has a statement of special education needs (SEN) which specifies a school.

The nearest suitable school for Transport purposes will be the state-maintained school which is closest to the applicant's home. Where parents have applied for Welsh medium or faith education, the same nearest and catchment criteria will apply. A learner's catchment school is defined by the Access Unit. Further information on catchment areas can be found by accessing [School catchment areas - Monmouthshire](#).

Whilst parents are free to exercise parental preference when selecting their preferred school, free home to school transport will not be provided if the preferred school is not their nearest suitable school (see 1.40 & 1.46 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure) or catchment school. When assessing the nearest suitable school, the Commissioning Team will consider schools that are outside of the Council's administrative boundary.

When assessing suitability for Transport purposes the Council will not consider parental preferences, if a

school has a poor Estyn report or is in special measures or parental concerns with a specific school.

If your nearest suitable school is full, eligibility will be assessed on the basis of the next nearest suitable school that has availability to accept the learner. The same distance eligibility criteria will apply.

Where a learner has to move schools due to incidents of bullying, free transport will only be provided where the Education Welfare Service or Access Unit have been involved and supported the change of schools. Evidence will need to be provided by either the Education Welfare Service or Access Unit to support the request for transport.

Where a younger sibling applies to attend the same school as an older sibling that receives free transport this does not guarantee that the younger sibling will receive it. Each learner is assessed on an individual basis according to the prevailing policy.

Available walking routes are continually reviewed to reflect changes to the local footpath infrastructure. If an assessment results in a route that was previously designated as unsafe being re-categorised as available, home to school transport will be withdrawn from the start of the next academic year. The delay in withdrawing the provision is to provide parents and learners with the opportunity to prepare for the change.

No transport will be provided for a learner attending a fee paying mainstream independent school.

Distance Criteria and how it is Calculated.

A learner's school must be over the prescribed distance for learners to be eligible for free home to school transport.

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure provides minimum statutory walking distances of 2 miles for primary aged learners and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils. Monmouthshire County Council, however, has chosen to improve the statutory provision and has instead adopted the following distance criteria for all eligible learners:

- Primary aged learners – free home to school transport will be provided if the distance between the nearest suitable school and the learners home is 1.5 miles or more.

- Secondary aged learners – free home to school transport will be provided if the distance between the nearest suitable school and the learners home is 2 miles or more.

The Council will determine your nearest suitable school via the shortest available walking route. This will be measured using a Digital Information Mapping System from the point your property meets the adopted highway to the nearest available entrance to the school. A walking route will be considered available if it is safe (as far as is reasonably practicable) for a learner without a disability or learning difficulty to walk the route alone or with an accompanying adult if the learners age or understanding requires this.

If the route to school is deemed to be unsafe (with regards to the degree of risk involved and whether the accompanying adult is at risk from the traffic situation), then the learner cannot be expected to walk to school even though the distance from home to school is below the prescribed 1.5 miles (primary) and 2 miles (secondary) distance limit that applies to his/her age. In such circumstances, the learner is entitled to free transport.

Discretionary Transport for Learners attending Faith and Welsh Medium Schools

Free Transport will be provided to learners attending their nearest suitable faith school subject to:

- Distance eligibility criteria being met and
- the learner being able to meet the faith criteria contained in their chosen school's oversubscription criteria.

The Commissioning Unit may consult with schools to confirm that learners can meet the said faith criteria.

Suitable in this context means age appropriate and faith appropriate, so that learners can access their nearest Catholic, or nearest Church in Wales schools depending on their parents' convictions.

If, however, the learner does not meet the faith criteria then the application will be assessed against the Council's distance eligibility criteria to their nearest or catchment school.

Learners attending Welsh medium education will be provided with free transport to their nearest suitable school, subject to meeting the distance eligibility criteria. "

Transport for Children Under 5

The provision of free home to school transport is a statutory requirement for those learners aged 5 to 16. Transport for 4-year-olds is discretionary and will only be provided if a learner is attending primary school and the parent confirms in writing that a driver and or passenger assistant is authorised to assist their child with the use of seatbelts.

Booster seats will not be provided for younger learners. A parent can however provide a booster seat for their child should they wish to do so.

Transport is not provided for learners attending nursery school.

Transport hierarchy and the allocation of transport

The Council has adopted the transport hierarchy outlined in Welsh Governments Transport Strategy, Llwybr Newydd. Where a learner has been assessed to be entitled to free home to school transport, the following transport hierarchy will be applied:

- i. *Public transport* – wherever possible learners attending secondary education facilities will be provided with a bus pass to travel on public bus services.
- ii. *Home to School transport* – will be provided for primary aged learners and where no public bus provision is available for secondary learners. Learners will be asked to meet transport at agreed pick up/drop off points, which will not be more than a mile from their home address. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children get to and from the designated pick up/drop off point.
- iii. *Feeder transport* will only be provided if designated pick up and drop off points are more than a mile (private driveways and roads will be disregarded when calculating distances).

Transport for Learners with Dual Residences

Where learners have more than one residence, they will be able to apply for home to school transport for up to two homes which are the nearest to their school. They will still need to meet the eligibility criteria in terms of distance, age and ability as outlined above. Evidence of the dual residency will be required from both parents which confirm the shared care arrangement. Where a learner lives with one parent but has contact with another parent, transport will only be provided to the learners' primary address.

Looked After Children

Where children are looked after by the Council, the same distance criteria to their nearest suitable school will apply.

Learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), i.e., a Statement of SEN or an IDP

Transport for children with ALN who do not meet the eligibility criteria will only be funded by the authority:

- to take a child to their nearest suitable or catchment school if he or she has major mobility problems, or
- if a child attends specialist provision (a special school or Specialist Resource Base) which has been approved by Monmouthshire County Council and the school is named in the learners IDP/Statement.

Transport will not be provided for children with additional learning needs (ALN) if the child is attending a school due to parental preference, i.e., a school that is not considered by the Local Authority to be the nearest suitable school. Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) or petrol expenses to cover mileage expenses are provided in exceptional circumstances and for time limited periods e.g., if there is no existing route. Time is required to commission this.

Free transport is only available to post 16 SEN pupils if they attend a specialist school or Specialist Resource Base (SRB). Free transport is not available to those learners attending further education within a mainstream school.

Medical Conditions

To qualify for assistance on medical grounds, the learner must be attending their nearest suitable or catchment school.

If a learner's medical needs affect their ability to travel to and from school accompanied as necessary by an adult, parents must provide supporting evidence from their child's consultant. The evidence should detail the difficulties that the learner will experience walking or travelling by public transport.

If transport is granted on medical grounds, the learner's case will be reviewed on an annual basis and up to date evidence on their medical condition will be required at each review. If up to date medical evidence is not provided transport will be withdrawn.

If a parent has a medical condition that prevents them from taking their primary aged children to and from school, discretionary transport may be provided. Parents must provide evidence of their medical condition from their consultant and their child must be attending their nearest suitable or catchment school.

Discretionary transport granted because of a parent's medical condition will be reviewed on an annual basis and up to date evidence of their medical condition will need to be provided for their review. If up to date medical evidence is not provided, then the discretionary transport will be withdrawn.

Discretionary transport will not be provided to secondary aged learners because of a parent's medical condition as it is expected that the learner will be able to travel to and from school without parental assistance.

Learners Changing Address During Year 10/11

If a learner changes their home address whilst studying for their GCSE exams in either years 10 or 11, they will be entitled to free home to school transport if they meet the following criteria:

- The school they attend was the nearest suitable or catchment school for their previous address.
- Evidence of their new address
- That their new address is more than 2 miles from their school.

If the learner attends a school that was not their previous nearest suitable or catchment school, they will not be provided with free home to school transport for their new address. If however their new address does mean that the school they are attending is now their nearest or catchment school they will be able to apply for transport in the normal way.

Length of the Journey

The Council will ensure that journeys are planned in such a way to minimise travel times. There is also the need however, to maximise limited public resources by maximising vehicle occupancy which may impact on journey times. Where possible, journey travel times will be a maximum of 60 minutes for mainstream secondary aged pupils and 45 minutes for mainstream primary aged pupils. For those learners attending Welsh medium, faith or special education settings, journey times may be more than an hour dependent on the location of the education setting.

It may not be possible for all learners to be collected from their home address and therefore it will be necessary for parents to take and collect their children from designated pick up and drop off points. Every effort will be made to keep this distance as short as possible, and it should not exceed 1 mile under normal circumstances.

Parents are responsible for the safe travel and safeguarding of their children from their home to the agreed pick up and drop off points.

If there is no available walking route to the pick-up point, transport will be provided.

Available Walking Routes

All walking routes are assessed based on the Learner Travel Measure and GB Road Safety Guidance.

Walking route assessments will be undertaken by the Councils Road Safety Officer or other suitably qualified person who will consider both the traffic and social risk factors. When undertaking the assessments, it will be assumed that an adult will accompany all primary aged children.

Copies of walking risk assessments will be made available to parents or learners on request.

Requests for routes to be assessed should be made to the Commissioning Team. Any maintenance concerns about an available walking route should be notified to the Commissioning Team on 01633 644777.

In the circumstances where a route assessment has been undertaken by the Council's Road Safety team and it is deemed unsafe, free transport will be provided.

Post 16 Transport

The Council does not provide free transport to any learners over the age of 16 at the start of the academic year, unless specified by a statement of SEN.

Post 16 mainstream learners will have the opportunity to apply for concessionary travel, but this will be dependent on the availability of seats, that there are no additional financial implications to the Council, no disruption to the transport route and the learner meets the vehicle at a point determined by the transport provider.

Post 16 concessionary seats are not guaranteed to be awarded from the start of the academic year; however, all learners will be notified if a seat is available within 10 working days of the commencement of the academic year. Learners attending Welsh medium or faith schools outside of the County area will be provided with concessionary travel. Applications should be received before the end of June so that transport can be arranged prior to the commencement of the academic year.

If an application is made during the school year, the applicant will be notified if a seat is available within 10 working days. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that learners are transported to and from school whilst their application is being considered.

If a concessionary seat is awarded, learners will be collected from a specified point that may be different from any previous pick up and collection points and be in excess of a mile, but no further than two miles from their home.

Learners will not be authorised to use a concessionary seat until it has been officially confirmed in writing by the Commissioning Team.

Pupils allocated a concessionary seat midway through a term will be charged per week for the number of weeks remaining in that term. Payment may be paid

in monthly instalments via a standing order by contacting the Sundry Debtor Team upon receiving an invoice.

On occasions it may be necessary to withdraw a concessionary seat, if the seat is withdrawn then we will provide 10 working days' notice and parents will be required to make alternative arrangements.

Applications for Post 16 concessionary transport will not be considered for learners who are in arrears for previous concessionary transport. When the arrears are cleared the learner will then become eligible for concessionary travel if a seat is available. Accounts will be checked regularly and where no attempt at payment has been made then we will provide notice that the seat has been withdrawn.

The seat will be awarded for 33 weeks only, however if learners need to travel during the study or exam period they can do so at no extra charge.

Refunds will be payable from the date that the Commissioning Team receive written confirmation from the parent that they wish to cancel their child's seat. Retrospective refunds will not be made.

If a Post 16 learner is in receipt of free school meals, they can apply for subsidised travel if they are attending their nearest suitable school.

Concessionary Travel

Those learners that are not eligible for free transport are able to apply for concessionary travel.

Concessionary seats will be awarded if a vacant seat exists, there is no financial implication to the Council, no disruption to the transport route and the learner is taken to a specified pick up and drop off point as determined by the transport provider.

Concessionary seats are not guaranteed to be awarded from the start of the academic year; however, all learners will be notified if a seat is available within 10 working days of the commencement of the academic year. If an application is made during the academic year, the applicant will be notified if a seat is available within 10 working days. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that the child/children are transported to and from school whilst their application is being considered.

The pickup and drop off point may be more than a mile from the learner's home but no further than 1.5

miles for primary aged learners and 2 miles for secondary.

Learners will not be authorised to use a concessionary placement until officially confirmed in writing by the Commissioning Team.

Applications for Post 16 learners will take priority for concessionary seats. If vacant seats remain, concessionary seats will be awarded based on when the application form was received. For one or more applications received on the same date, the learner whose home address measures the furthest walking distance to the educational establishment will take precedence.

On occasions it may be necessary to withdraw a concessionary seat, if the seat is withdrawn then we will provide 10 working days' notice and parents will be required to make alternative arrangements.

Pupils allocated a concessionary seat midway through a term will be charged per week for the number of weeks remaining in that term. Payment may be paid in monthly instalments via a standing order by contacting the Sundry Debtor Team upon receiving an invoice.

Applications for concessionary transport will not be considered for learners who are in arrears for previous concessionary transport. When the arrears are cleared the learner will then become eligible for concessionary travel if a seat is available.

Refunds will be payable from the date that the Commissioning Team receive written confirmation from the parent that they wish to cancel their child's seat. Retrospective refunds will not be made.

Mode of Transport

Where a learner has been awarded free transport, travel will be in the form of a season ticket for public transport or on dedicated home to school transport.

The Council will always in the first instance seek to provide transport for secondary learners via season tickets on public transport and dedicated transport will only be provided if public transport is not available.

Parents are not able to choose which form of transport or specify vehicles their child will travel on. If a learner does travel on dedicated home to school transport, there is no guarantee that the driver or

passenger assistant will stay throughout the learners' academic journey.

There is no guarantee that a learner with special educational needs will automatically receive a passenger assistant in the vehicle provided or be a sole passenger. The provision of passenger assistants is determined by the evidence provided by the learner's consultant or SEN statement.

Bus Passes

All learners travelling on dedicated transport will require a QR code to travel. This can be downloaded from the Councils Elitech software and parents will be provided with guidance how to do this when they are advised that their application for transport has been successful.

The QR code will need to be scanned by the learner when they embark and disembark a vehicle. A hard copy or digital QR code can be used. If a learner loses their QR code during the day, all drivers have a list of passengers so the learner will still be able to travel if they are on the passenger list. No learner will be able to travel without a QR code or inclusion on the passenger list.

Those learners who have been granted free travel on public transport will be issued a season ticket by the operator prior to the commencement of the academic year.

Additional Journeys

Transport is only provided to and from the learner's home and school. Transport will not be provided to breakfast or after school clubs or for any journeys required during the school day.

Where a learner is taking part in an induction process or has a reduced school schedule, transport will not be provided, and parents will need to make their own arrangements.

Transport will not be provided where a learner needs to leave school prior to the end of the school day for sickness or to attend medical appointments.

If a family must reside in a temporary address, transport will not normally be provided. If there are however exceptional circumstances, e.g., the learner is in years 10 and 11 discretionary transport may be provided.

Right to Withdraw Transport

Where it becomes evident that free transport has been provided in error, the Council has the right to withdraw the transport with 21 days' notice.

Where circumstances change with the walking route measurement or assessment during an academic year, the free transport will be withdrawn at the end of the academic term.

Where concessionary transport has been awarded and the seat is subsequently no longer available e.g., it is required for a pupil eligible for free transport or the contract is terminated, the pass will be withdrawn with 10 days' notice.

Behavioural Issues

The safety of all learners travelling on home to school transport is paramount. If a learner misbehaves, the Council reserves the right to withdraw the transport provision. Whenever the Commissioning Team is made aware of an incident on home to school transport they will liaise with schools and the Education Directorate to investigate the incident. Where necessary warning letters and or email correspondence will be sent to the parents of learners who misbehave, cause damage to a vehicle, threaten or cause injury to passengers or drivers / passenger assistants or behave in such a way that might jeopardise safety. Home to school transport may be withdrawn from the learner on a temporary or permanent basis in accordance with the Learner Travel Operational Guidance.

The Council also reserves the right to either suspend or cancel transport for learners where drivers or passenger assistants have received verbal abuse or been physically assaulted by parents or guardians. In such cases the victims will be encouraged to report such actions to the police and any other necessary authorities.

Where transport is withdrawn, parents are responsible for ensuring that their child gets to school.

Personal Transport Budgets

The Council may choose to offer parents a personal transport budget (PTB), where it is the most cost-effective solution for the Council to meet its statutory duties. It will not automatically be provided and will not be granted where existing suitable transport is in operation.

The PTB is a payment designed to reimburse parents for the costs incurred in providing transport for their

children. The payments are made directly into the parent's bank account monthly. The PTB will be calculated based on the driving distance between home and school (by using a Digital Information Mapping System), from the point your property meets the adopted highway to the nearest available entrance to the school. In addition, a calculation will be undertaken to determine the usual time it takes to travel from your home to the school and back again. Payments to parents will be calculated on a daily rate which includes the travel time and mileage for two journeys to the school and back. Reimbursement rates will be confirmed prior to the commencement of the transport arrangement.

Payments will be made to parents as follows:

September: Full Monthly Payment based on the completion of all school days for the calendar month.

October to July – The Commissioning Team will contact the school to confirm any learner absences in the preceding month. If a learner has been absent the monthly payment will be reduced to reflect the days where travel has not been incurred.

There will not be any additional allowance for delays due to traffic conditions.

The ALN team may determine that a petrol allowance will be the most appropriate reimbursement method and will advise parents / carers prior to the commencement of transport.

Unforeseen Circumstances

If a transport operator is unable to provide transport due to an emergency or unforeseen circumstance, the Commissioning Team will try to secure alternative transport provision. If, however alternative transport cannot be provided, parents will be contacted and asked to take their children to school. If parents agree they will be reimbursed for the mileage incurred at the rate of 65p a mile following the submission of a completed claims form.

Complaints Process

Only complaints received in writing from parents or learners will be investigated by the Council. Complaints should be made to:

passengertransportunit@monmouthshire.gov.uk

The Commissioning Unit will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and respond within 10 working days. There may be occasions where we

will need to take longer than 10 working days and we will advise you when this happens and provide a timescale as to when you will receive a response.

If a complaint is upheld, appropriate steps will be taken to remedy the issue as soon as is practicable.

Appeals Process

If an application for free transport is refused a parent can appeal the decision using the following process:

Stage 1

The parent should complete an appeal form which can be obtained from the Commissioning Team by emailing:

passengertransportunit@monmouthshire.gov.uk

or calling

01633 644777

The appeal form should be returned to the Commissioning Team with supporting evidence. Their appeal will be considered by the Commissioning Manager, and they will receive a formal response within 21 working days.

Stage 2

If the parent is not satisfied with the appeal decision, they can refer the matter to the Head of Decarbonisation, Transport & Support Services. The Head of Service will consider the appeal and any supporting information against the Councils Home to School Transport Policy and the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure.

A response will be provided within 21 days. If the appeal is rejected, there will be no further right of appeal.

If the parent is dissatisfied with the decision process and believes that they have not been treated fairly and in accordance with the Councils Home to School Transport Policy, they can make a formal complaint by contacting.

feedback@monmouthshire.gov.uk or calling 01633 644644.

Appendix 3 – Integrated Impact Assessment



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Integrated Impact Assessment document (incorporating Equalities, Future Generations, Welsh Language and Socio Economic Duty)

<p>Name of the Officer completing the evaluation</p> <p>Debra Hill-Howells</p> <p>Phone no: 0775 851405 E-mail: debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk</p>	<p>Please give a brief description of the aims of the proposal</p> <p>The report seeks consent to consult on the Draft Transport Policy for 24-25. The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 requires that policies are reviewed annually, and the agreed policy is published by the 1st October for application in the following academic year. The report provides a draft Transport Policy for 24-25 and seeks approval to undertake consultation before a final version is presented to Members in September.</p>
<p>Name of Service area</p> <p>Decarbonisation, Transport & Support Services</p>	<p>Date 05th September 2023 (6th revision)</p> <p>(11th July 2022, revision 2: Sept 2022, revision 3: April 23, revision 4: 20th July 2023, revision 5 23rd August 2023)</p>

- 1. Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	<p>The proposal details the Transport Policy for statutory learners attending state funded education settings between the age of 4 and 16. It details the eligibility criteria for access to free transport which provides greater opportunity than that prescribed in the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure (LTM) e.g., transport is provided for those learners attending their nearest suitable or catchment school who live 1.5 miles from a primary school or 2 miles from a secondary.</p>	<p>Free home to school transport for post 16's is not provided in accordance with the LTM. This can create particular problems for secondary learners attending Welsh Medium or faith education as they need to travel out of county.</p>	<p>We provide concessionary travel to Post 16 pupils; however, this is dependent on spare seats within existing contracts. We will ensure that there all Post 16 Welsh medium learners have access to concessionary travel if required.</p> <p>We are reviewing the opportunities to amend public bus service timetables and increase provision to allow more learners to travel on public buses. This will also increase travel opportunities for the wider community.</p>
Disability	<p>The existing policy provides criteria for the provision of transport for learners with ALN and accessible transport is provided based on their assessed needs.</p> <p>All learners attending primary and secondary settings are able to apply for discretionary transport if they have a medical condition or disability.</p> <p>If a primary aged learners' parents have a medical condition which prevents them from supporting their child walking to school, they can apply for discretionary transport if they live less than 1.5 miles from their nearest suitable school. No changes are proposed to this provision</p>	<p>No changes to existing policy provision</p>	<p>The discretionary application process has not been changed to ensure that learners with a medically assessed condition which impacts their ability to walk to school can access free transport.</p> <p>The distance criteria applied by MCC is lower than the statutory guidelines which results in more learners being eligible for free transport.</p>

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Gender reassignment	.The provision of free school transport is available to all eligible pupils regardless of their gender.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Team works with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment.
Marriage or civil partnership	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy or maternity	We will provide discretionary transport to any learner with a proven medical condition that meets the eligibility criteria or due to their condition are unable to walk to school or access public transport. We will work with the learner, their parents and the school to ensure that anyone who is pregnant and meets the criteria is able to safely travel on school transport.	N/A	We will work with individual learners, parents and schools to ensure that school transport is safe for pregnant learners.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Race	. The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or racial harassment action might be delayed until such time we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or racial harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Team will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment due to a learner's ethnicity.
Religion or Belief	.Free home to school transport is provided for learners attending their nearest faith school.	<p>Parents may wish to exercise parental preference and place their children in a faith school that is not their nearest, which will result in the loss of free school transport.</p> <p>The amended policy proposals introduce a requirement for learners attending faith schools to have met the distance eligibility criteria and the learner being able to meet the faith criteria contained in their chosen school's oversubscription criteria to be able to access discretionary free home to school transport.</p>	The provision of discretionary free school transport to faith schools already exceeds the requirements of the LTM.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sex	The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Unit will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Sexual Orientation	. The provision of free school transport is available to any learner that meets the eligibility criteria.	Passenger assistants are not routinely provided on vehicles and therefore if there were issues of bullying or harassment action might be delayed until such time we receive a complaint from a learner or their parent if they are travelling by coach. If they are on a smaller vehicle the driver may be more aware of any issues arising on the vehicle and be able to intervene	<p>Where incidents of bullying or harassments are alleged to occur, the Commissioning Unit will work with the school to undertake an investigation. If the allegations are proven we will work with the school to put any reasonable recommended solutions in place including the provision of a PA. Sanctions will be imposed against the perpetrator of proven acts of violence, bullying or harassment.</p> <p>Equalities training will be provided as soon as it is available from the corporate training service and bespoke advice will be sought for individual cases.</p>

2. The Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice

The Socio-economic Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage when taking key decisions This duty aligns with our commitment as an authority to Social Justice.

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has in respect of people suffering socio economic disadvantage.	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Socio-economic Duty and Social Justice</p>	<p>The provision of free home to school transport ensures that all learners have equal access to education. The distance criteria are more favourable than that included within the LTM which results in more learners being able to access free transport. Where parents are able to provide current medical information that confirms they are unable to walk or drive their primary aged children to school, discretionary transport is provided. Subsidized concessionary seats are made available where vacant seats exist. The authority is currently reviewing the opportunities to increase public bus provision to enable more learners and members of the public to have accessible to sustainable transport. More passengers on public buses will assist the financial viability of the services, thereby safeguarding the services. Learners have the opportunity to apply for free transport to their nearest suitable or catchment schools if they are different and out of county schools will be considered as part of the nearest suitable evaluation process.</p>	<p>Post 16 pupils are not entitled to free school transport and are therefore reliant on vacant seats being available and their parents being able to support the £440 annual cost.</p> <p>Secondary Welsh medium and faith schools are outside the county boundaries which does mean that journey times are longer.</p>	<p>Where parents can demonstrate that their primary aged pupils have medical conditions that prevent them from walking to school, discretionary transport may be awarded.</p> <p>The Council is working with bus operators and Transport for Wales to maximise the opportunities for maintaining or enhancing public bus service provision which will have broader benefits beyond learners.</p> <p>The Council will ensure that for Post 16 Welsh learners attending their nearest suitable school, concessionary travel will be available if required.</p>

3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:	Describe the positive impacts of this proposal	Describe the negative impacts of this proposal	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>Policy Making</p> <p>Effects on the use of the Welsh language,</p> <p>Promoting Welsh language</p> <p>Treating the Welsh language, no less favourably</p>	<p>The LTM measure provides LAs with the ability to provide discretionary transport to Welsh medium schools. This policy proposes that all learners wishing to attend Welsh medium education will have access to free transport to their nearest suitable Welsh medium school if they meet the distance eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>If parents choose to exercise parental preference and choose a school setting that is not their nearest suitable Welsh medium school, transport will not be provided. This is in alignment with the LTM and mainstream education.</p> <p>Post 16 learners will not have access to free school transport which creates transport issues for secondary learners who have to travel out of county.</p>	<p>Post 16 learners will be able to access concessionary travel to their nearest suitable school.</p>
<p>Operational</p> <p>Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>		<p>Recruiting drivers is extremely challenging in the current climate and their driving qualifications take priority over their Welsh language skills.</p> <p>Staff can only access Welsh language training courses where they do not impact on school transport duties.</p>	<p>All colleagues have access to Welsh language training courses.</p>
<p>Service delivery</p>	<p>Parents can apply for school transport through the medium of Welsh. All</p>	<p>Drivers and passenger assistants may not be able to</p>	<p>All colleagues have access to Welsh language training</p>

Use of Welsh language in service delivery Promoting use of the language	communications can be undertaken through the Welsh Language.	converse in Welsh on the vehicles.	courses that are provided centrally.
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4. Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below? Please explain the impact (positive and negative) you expect, together with suggestions of how to mitigate negative impacts or better contribute to the goal. There's no need to put something in every box if it is not relevant!

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs</p>	<p>The provision of free school transport ensures that learners can access mainstream, Welsh medium or faith schools if they are more than 1.5 or 2 miles away from their homes. ALN transport is provided based on their individual assessments and needs.</p> <p>The adoption of Welsh Government's Transport hierarchy and the promotion of public bus services will ensure that resources are maximized for the benefit of all community members.</p> <p>Learners can access free home to school transport to either their nearest suitable or catchment if they are different.</p>	<p>The reduced distance eligibility requirements have increased access to school transport and the inclusion of medical reasons in the policy will prevent learners being disadvantaged due to their or their parents' medical circumstances.</p> <p>School transport requires a local supply chain to operate home to school contracts. An in-house passenger transport service has been created to respond to market failure that provides roles for drivers, passenger assistants and supervisory staff.</p> <p>We will continue to evaluate the opportunity to change existing bus timetables or increase public bus provision to allow more learners to travel on public bus services.</p>


Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g., climate change)</p>	<p>Free school transport reduces the number of motor cars that need to undertake the school run thereby helping to reduce the county's carbon footprint.</p> <p>Additional available walking routes are being created to reduce the requirement to transport learners who do not meet the distance eligibility criteria. This will improve the active travel network for all community members.</p> <p>The Commissioning Unit is working with the Transport team to maximise the opportunities to use public bus services, thereby reducing vehicle movements and the resulting carbon emissions.</p> <p>Learners can access free transport to either their nearest suitable or catchment schools, if they are different, which can reduce mileage, journey times and carbon emissions. Feeder status is not considered when assessing nearest suitable school, which may negatively impact some communities where their primary school is identified as a feeder school for an out of county comprehensive which is neither their nearest suitable nor catchment school.</p>	<p>The Council has started its fleet transition and currently has four electric buses.</p> <p>Routes are continually assessed to identify opportunities to combine routes and reduce the number of vehicles. Available walking routes are also continually reviewed where transport has been provided as a route has been deemed unavailable and the walking distance is below the eligible thresholds. Capital funding has been made available to increase the number of available walking routes to reduce the requirement for transport.</p> <p>We are actively seeking to reduce the number of home to school transport vehicles by increasing the opportunities to award bus passes for public bus services.</p> <p>The Council exceeds its statutory LTM obligations and provides free transport to either nearest suitable or catchment if they are different, faith and Welsh medium schools. All Monmouthshire learners have access to a Monmouthshire catchment school.</p>



Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized, and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>Where primary aged learners live within 1.5 miles of their school and secondary 2 miles of the school they are encouraged to use active travel to get to school. Additional walking routes are being created to reduce the number of pupils being transported as a walking route is not currently available.</p> <p>The policy proposes the adoption of Welsh Governments transport hierarchy which prioritises active travel. Feeder school status is not an eligibility criteria when assessing access to free school transport, which may impact on the mental health of students who attend a school which is different from their community peer group, if they wish to access free transport. There is no guarantee that siblings will have access to free transport to the same school as circumstances may have changed in the intervening period e.g., catchment reviews. This may result in negative mental health impacts for learners and create additional financial burdens for families.</p>	<p>We are working with Highways colleagues on the creation of additional walking routes and capital funding has been made available to deliver new infrastructure.</p> <p>We will not withdraw transport to existing transport users as a result of policy changes. Any agreed policy changes are published in October in advance of school application processes so that parents are clear on their entitlement to free transport before applying for school places.</p> <p>By enabling parents to access free home to transport for nearest suitable or catchment if they are different, it provides the opportunity for parents to have a choice of schools and potentially reduce journey times if the nearest school (which could be out of county) is selected.</p>
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected</p>	<p>School transport provides access to learners to attend their nearest suitable or catchment</p>	<p>Maintaining and where possible improving the existing public bus infrastructure is a key priority given the forthcoming changes to the current</p>



Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	<p>schools thereby developing friendships and support networks.</p> <p>School transport does not consider feeder school status which may be different from the catchment or nearest suitable schools which may negatively impact on those learners who will not receive transport to their preferred school.</p>	<p>funding model. Transferring secondary aged learners to public buses will generate additional fare income and potentially reduce the costs of home to school transport.</p>
<p>A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing</p>	<p>The procurement of external operators is undertaken through a collaborative procurement system with neighbouring authorities and contractual terms and conditions are aligned. We have developed or own in house transport provision to respond to market failure so that resources can be provided locally.</p>	<p>We are undertaking improvements to the active travel infrastructure and exploring opportunities to maintain or enhance the public bus network within Monmouthshire</p>
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation</p>	<p>Free home to school transport is provided for statutory aged learners who wish to attend their nearest suitable or catchment Welsh medium school.</p>	<p>All Welsh medium Post 16 learners attending their nearest suitable or catchment school will have access to concessionary travel.</p>
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</p>	<p>Free home to school transport is accessible to all learners who meet the eligibility criteria. In addition, discretionary travel is proposed for specific sets of learners to ensure</p>	<p>Improvements to public bus timetables and networks will enable learners who do not meet the eligibility criteria to access public transport.</p>

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
	that they can safely access their nearest suitable or catchment schools.	

5. How has your proposal embedded and prioritized the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future</p>	<p>School transport changes on an annual basis as new learners start their education journey or move into the area and others leave the education setting. We work with the Access Unit to identify those learners that are eligible for transport and have contacted all parents of new school starters to advise if they are eligible for free transport.</p> <p>As the service requirements change annually, long term planning is difficult however we are seeking to mitigate this through the adoption of WG's transport hierarchy and the improvements to the walking infrastructure and public networks.</p>	<p>Routes are assessed when new learners apply for transport to determine if routes can be aggregated, or vehicle size is increased.</p> <p>The Councils Schools & Community transport service continually review their operational needs in order to respond to contractor hand backs, lack of tenders etc. The transition of the fleet will help offset our carbon footprint and plan for future legislative requirements for accessible and net zero school transport vehicles.</p> <p>The provision of annual Transport Policy provides a framework for how decisions will be made.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Working together with other partners to deliver objectives</p> <p>Collaboration</p>	<p>For school transport to be successful it needs to be delivered in partnership with operators, parents, schools and learners as well as other Council service areas. We also work with neighbouring authorities to procure operators on a standard contract, agree annual price uplifts and share learning.</p> <p>The Transport team is currently working with the Commissioning Unit and operators to identify opportunities to improve the public bus network for learners.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation process undertaken in June 2023 has been used to review and amend the proposed Transport Policy for 24-25</p>
 <p>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p>Involvement</p>	<p>The Council undertook a consultation process between 31st May and the 29th June. All parents/carers of existing units were contacted to make them aware of the consultation as were all schools. A press release was issued at the start of the process and there were regular social media updates reminding community members to respond.</p> <p>Responses from key stakeholders have been responded to and drafting changes have been undertaken.</p>	<p>The proposed Transport Policy has been amended to reflect the feedback.</p>

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
 <p>Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse</p> <p>Prevention</p>	<p>Due to ongoing issues around lack of external bids or bids being excessive our internal provision has expanded to fill any potential service gaps. Whilst the majority of contracts are still undertaken through external operators the internal resource has increasingly had to step in to cover contract hand backs or operator failures.</p> <p>Increased use of the public bus network to transport learners will improve the viability of publicly accessible services.</p>	<p>When a new contract is taken on by the internal service, if this exceeds existing capacity we review existing routes and where possible release one back for external tender. This ensures that contracts are available for the external operators and mitigates the impact of additional contracts on the existing workforce. If no bids are received or they are higher than the internal cost of provision the contract is transferred to the internal team and capacity is adjusted accordingly.</p>
 <p>Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies</p> <p>Integration</p>	<p>The provision of home to school transport is an essential service underpinning learner's education journeys. The service is however resource intensive and reactive to the needs of the learners. The proposed policy provides a framework which ensures consistency in evaluating applications for transport, provides certainty for parents and learners and guidance on how discretionary transport will be awarded. The alignment of the policy to WG's transport hierarchy will benefit the wider community by increasing the viability of public service provision.</p>	<p>The consultation has enabled officers to reflect on the proposed policy and identify opportunities for improvement.</p>

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on the following important responsibilities: Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect any of these responsibilities?

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	<p>All drivers, passenger assistants and operators are required to undertake safeguarding training.</p> <p>The policy sets out how school transport will be assessed and provided for looked after children, learners with special educational needs and mainstream learners.</p> <p>All learners, parents and operators are required to adhere to our Rule Book to ensure the safety for all those involved.</p> <p>All safeguarding concerns are subject to a Multi-Agency referral process and when required a full safeguarding review.</p>	<p>.Where safeguarding concerns cross the MARF threshold, drivers and or passenger assistants may be suspended from undertaking their duties/contracts. This can create a financial and emotional burden on the individuals concerned and the safeguarding investigation process can take a significant period to resolve.</p>	<p>External operators will have the option to have a member of the Commissioning Team appointed as a welfare point of contact to keep them informed (as much as they are able) on the progress of the investigation.</p> <p>MCC colleagues will follow internal policy and procedures.</p> <p>The paramount concern remains the safe transportation of our learners.</p>
Corporate Parenting	<p>The policy sets out the eligibility criteria for looked after children. The service works closely with Children's Services to provision specific transport needs as required.</p>		

7. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008

Learner Travel Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance 2008

Existing Transport Policy and Lessons Learnt

Existing transport contracts and engagement with individual learners and their parents

School transport appeals and requests for discretionary transport

A review of other LA Transport policies

The removal of BES grant funding for Bus Operators

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021

Public Consultation & the resulting feedback June 2023

8. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The form has highlighted the complexities of the provision of home to school transport including its substantial impact on resources, its impact on climate change and the need to continually evaluate the provision to respond to a changing social, economic and environmental back drop. The proposed consultation will enable us to consider the feedback against the legislative framework, resources constraints and the wants and wishes of service users. We will be able to articulate where we have been able to make changes to the policy as the result of the feedback and where we have been unable to change the policy the reason why.

It will also enable parents and learners the opportunity to plan for any changes from September 24.

9. ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible
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Report to be presented to Cabinet seeking approval to consult on the draft policy	3 rd May 2023	Head of Service
Undertake consultation on the draft policy	May – June 2023	Commissioning Team
People Scrutiny Committee	August 23	Head of Service
Review feedback, finalize draft and seek Member approval	September 23	Head of Service & Commissioning Manager
Publish Transport Policy 24-25	1 st October 22	Commissioning Manager

10. VERSION CONTROL: The Equality and Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stage, such as informally within your service, and then further developed throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process to demonstrate how you have considered and built in equality and future generations considerations wherever possible.

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Cabinet approval to consult on proposed Transport Policy 23-24	27th July 2022	
2.	Cabinet Update	7 th September 2022	
3.	Cabinet decision to consult on proposed Transport Policy 24-25	May 2023	Updated to reflect proposed policy changes for 24-25
4.	Public Consultation	31 st May – 29 th June 2023	Draft document amended to reflect feedback
6	Cabinet approval of the revised policy	05 th September 2023	Amendments made to clarify the drafting in the policy regarding faith school criteria and safe walking routes following feedback during consultation