



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

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 asks Cabinet to consider the results and feedback from the recent public consultation on Home to School Transport and proposes that the Councils distance eligibility criteria reverts to the statutory requirements of 2 miles for primary and three miles for secondary learners. It also proposes the expansion of the use of personal transport budgets where parents/guardians agree with its adoption.</p>
<p>Name of Service area</p> <p>Decarbonisation, Transport & Support Services</p>	<p>Date 28th August 2024</p> <p>(11th July 2022, revision 2: Sept 2022, revision 3: April 23, revision 4: 20th July 2023, revision 5: 24th August 2023, revision 6 16th July 2024)</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 learners attending state funded education settings between the age of 4 and 16. It is proposed that discretionary free transport for 4-year-olds and those attending faith and Welsh medium education will continue subject to them meeting the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The options propose that the distance eligibility criteria are increased to 2 miles for primary learners and 3 miles for secondary learners, aligning with the Councils statutory responsibilities. This will negatively impact on learners who currently have access to transport at 1.5 miles for primary and 2 miles for secondary. It has been assessed that this will impact on the following existing users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 70 mainstream primary learners 53 faith primary learners 10 Welsh medium primary learners 167 mainstream secondary learners 	<p>Bus timetables for socially necessary services have been improved to enable more secondary aged learners to utilise public transport to travel to and from school. We will continue to work with operators and review feedback to identify further opportunities for improvement. In addition, we will continue to support schools to promote active travel and where possible implement school streets.</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?
Disability	<p>The existing policy provides criteria for the provision of transport for learners with ALN based on their assessed needs.</p> <p>All learners attending primary and secondary settings can apply for discretionary transport if they have a medical condition or disability which prevents them from walking to school.</p> <p>If a primary aged learner's parents have a medical condition which prevents them from supporting their child walking to school, they can apply for discretionary transport. No changes are proposed to this provision.</p> <p>Option 3 proposes the use of personal transport budgets for learners where we have been unable to secure an operator or where a PTB would be the most effective financial option. Parents will not be obligated to accept a PTB, but for those who are able to or would transport their own children they will receive financial support to do so.</p>	<p>The proposed changes to the distance eligibility criteria will be mitigated by the discretionary provision described.</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>Respondents to the consultation expressed concern that any changes would have a disproportionate impact for ALN users of transport. S17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a statutory duty on the Council to safeguard and promote the upbringing of children in need which includes those with health or development impairments. The Councils proposals do not seek to undermine this duty and learners with additional learning needs will continue to be assessed by CYP colleagues to determine their educational and transport needs. The Councils discretionary policy will act as a secondary safeguard for ALN learners who do not meet the distance eligibility criteria but their specific needs necessitate 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 harassment 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	None Identified at this stage	None identified at this stage	None identified at this stage
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.	None identified at this stage	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.

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?
Religion or Belief	.Free discretionary home to school transport is provided for learners attending their nearest faith school.	The proposed reversion to the statutory distances will impact on 53 primary aged learners who currently access free home to school transport. The proposed changes may impact on parental decisions for their children’s preferred education medium.	<p>Bus timetables for socially necessary services have been improved to enable more secondary aged learners to utilise public transport to travel to and from school. We will continue to work with operators and review feedback to identify further opportunities for improvement. In addition, we will continue to support schools to promote active travel and where possible implement school streets.</p> <p>Respondents did express concern over the fairness of the proposed changes, particularly for those attending faith or Welsh language schools which may not be their nearest schools. When assessing transport applications for learners who have selected faith or Welsh language schools, the distance will be determined on the nearest suitable faith or Welsh medium school, mainstream schools will be disregarded from the assessment. The proposals will not impact on secondary faith or Welsh language learners due to the travel distances to their respective schools. There is a possible impact of up to 53 learners attending a faith school, however as these are catchment schools for a number of communities, we are unable to ascertain if the learners are attending the schools due to faith reasons or it is their nearest suitable or catchment school.</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?
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 harassment 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
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	Where incidents of bullying or harassment 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. 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.

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?
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**Socio-economic
Duty and Social
Justice**

The provision of free home to school transport ensures that all learners have equal access to education. The continuation of discretionary transport for 4-year-olds, faith and Welsh medium education ensures that parents can still access their chosen education establishment subject to meeting the eligibility criteria. Discretionary transport for evidenced medical conditions will continue to be available. Subsidised concessionary seats are made available where vacant seats exist. Learners can 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.

The proposed options will reduce the availability of free home to school transport for existing and future learners. This may negatively impact on learners and their families who had applied for a specific school based on their ability to access free home to school transport. It will impact families who will struggle to provide alternative travel arrangements due to existing commitments or work requirements.

There is the potential that the additional walking distance from home to school may discourage parents from choosing Welsh medium education in favour of placing their children in an English-medium school which meets the eligibility criteria for transport. If this were to happen it would reduce the ability for the Council to achieve certain outcomes of the WESP.

Respondents have expressed concern that the proposal will result in additional hardship for parents and particularly those that work, are on low incomes or do not have access to a vehicle. It is accepted that where parents/guardians chose to transport their children to school rather than walk or cycle this will result in additional costs for families. The statutory distances have recently been reviewed by Welsh Government and they have confirmed that no changes will be made. The recent retendering of public buses has enabled the Council to improve the accessibility of public transport to secondary aged learners which can also provide a more affordable alternative to private car use. We do acknowledge however that the loss of transport may place additional burdens on working parents, particularly those with primary aged children.

Where parents can demonstrate that their primary aged pupils have medical conditions that prevent them from walking to school, discretionary transport may be awarded.

The Council will ensure that for Post 16 Welsh learners attending their nearest suitable school will be able to access concessionary travel.

			The Council will support schools to promote active travel and where feasible school streets.
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3. Policy making and the Welsh language.

<p>How does your proposal impact on the following aspects of the Council's Welsh Language Standards:</p>	<p>Describe the positive impacts of this proposal</p>	<p>Describe the negative impacts of this proposal</p>	<p>What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?</p>
<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 continue to have access to free transport to their nearest suitable Welsh medium school if they meet the distance eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>The proposal to revert to statutory distances will impact on 10 existing Welsh medium primary learners who will no longer be eligible for free home to school transport.</p> <p>The proposed changes may negatively impact on future parental decisions to access Welsh medium education if they are unable to access free home to school transport. There is the potential that the additional walking distance from home to school may discourage parents from choosing Welsh medium education in favour of placing their children in an English-medium school which is within catchment area for transport. If this were to happen it would reduce the ability for the Council to achieve certain outcomes of the WESP.</p>	<p>The proposal will not impact secondary learners due to the need to travel out of County to access Welsh medium secondary education. The proposal will impact primary aged Welsh Medium learners attending Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni and Ysgol Gymraeg Y Ffin. A new Welsh medium seedling school will be opening in Monmouth in September which will increase access to Welsh medium primary education and mitigate the need for learners to travel to Abergavenny.</p> <p>The Welsh Language Commissioner has previously stated that as there are less Welsh-medium schools compared to English medium schools, access to Welsh-medium education is more difficult and costly as pupils are likely to live further away from Welsh-medium schools compared to English-medium schools. (https://www.welshlanguagecommissioner.wales/news/welsh-language-commissioner-responds-to-recent-issues-concerning-post-</p>

[16-learners-having-difficulties-accessing-free-transport-for-welsh-language-education-provision](#) Post

16 Welsh medium learners will be guaranteed access to concessionary travel to their nearest suitable Welsh Medium school.

Consultation feedback has highlighted the need to ensure that accessing Welsh medium education is as convenient as attending English medium schools and maintaining transport is essential. The proposals if adopted will be equally applied to all learners and there are no proposals to withdraw discretionary transport to Welsh medium schools.

Some respondents have noted that Welsh medium education may be more attractive as they tend to be further away and therefore free transport will be available. Conversely if they live within the 2-mile limit they will be less likely to attend a Welsh medium school and instead attend a closer English medium school. This will have a long-term impact on learners choosing to access Welsh medium education. Some responders have proposed means testing and requiring parents to pay for transport. The Council is not able to charge for statutory required services and does not propose to

			charge for discretionary transport to Welsh medium or faith schools.
<p>Operational</p> <p>Recruitment & Training of workforce</p>	<p>Fully funded Welsh language courses are available to all staff members.</p> <p>All vacant posts are assessed as being Welsh language desirable as a minimum requirement.</p>	<p>Recruiting drivers is extremely challenging in the current climate, however, all vacant posts are advertised as being Welsh language desirable as a minimum requirement</p> <p>Staff can access Welsh language training courses where they do not impact on school transport duties.</p> <p>If parents choose English-medium education over Welsh-medium education as an unintended impact of the transport policy, this might impact the number of Welsh speakers entering the workforce in the future and the Welsh language services the Council will be able to provide</p>	<p>Welsh language courses are offered to all staff members at every level and are fully funded. These courses are available during work hours and during the evenings for staff members where it might not be possible for them to complete a course during their work day.</p>
<p>Service delivery.</p> <p>Use of Welsh language in service delivery</p> <p>Promoting use of the language</p>	<p>Parents can apply for school transport through the medium of Welsh. All communications can be undertaken through the Welsh Language.</p> <p>The Council will continue to provide discretionary transport to Welsh medium schools subject to learners meeting the eligibility criteria.</p>	<p>Drivers and passenger assistants may not be able to converse in Welsh on the vehicles.</p> <p>If because of this transport policy pupils spend less time with their peers travelling, this could impact their opportunities to use the Welsh language.</p>	<p>All colleagues have access to Welsh language training courses that are provided centrally.</p>

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. The proposals to revert to statutory distances will negatively impact on learners who live less than 2 miles from their nearest suitable or catchment primary school and 3 miles from their nearest suitable or catchment school. ALN transport is provided based on their individual assessments subject to meeting the distance eligibility criteria.</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>The potential impact on working parents arising from the consultation has been outlined in 3.20 of the report and the Councils response is contained in 3.21.</p> <p>The continued inclusion of discretionary transport for learners who are unable to walk to school due to evidenced medical reasons will prevent learners being disadvantaged due to their 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>Timetables for socially necessary public bus services have recently been reviewed to improve the opportunity for secondary learners to access public transport.</p>
<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. The proposals to revert to statutory distances however may result in additional vehicle movements if parents transport their children to school by private cars which will increase carbon emissions.</p>	<p>The potential traffic and pollution and environmental impacts arising from the consultation have been outlined in 3.20 of the report and the Councils response is in 3.21.</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>The Commissioning Unit continues to work 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 not their nearest suitable or catchment school.</p>	<p>The Council has started its fleet transition and currently has 12 electric vehicles in its passenger transport fleet.</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.</p> <p>We continue to prioritise the use of public bus services for secondary learners. The Council provides free transport to either nearest suitable or catchment if they are different, faith and Welsh medium schools subject to meeting the distance eligibility criteria. All Monmouthshire learners have access to a Monmouthshire catchment school.</p>
<p>A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood</p>	<p>The home to school policy adopts Welsh Governments transport hierarchy which prioritises active travel and public bus services.</p> <p>The proposal to adopt statutory distances will negatively impact on learners who may lose their eligibility to free home to school transport. This may result in negative mental health impacts for learners and create additional financial burdens for families.</p> <p>Feeder school status is not an eligibility criterion when assessing access to free school transport, which may impact on the mental health of students</p>	<p>Any policy changes will be published on or before 1st 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>If the statutory distances are adopted this may lead to more learners walking or cycling to school which will have physical health benefits. However, if parents choose to drive them their children to and from school, these benefits will be lost.</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>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>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 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>The impact on rural areas and safety concerns arising from the consultation and the response to these points are included in 3.20 and 3.21 of the covering report.</p> <p>Maintaining and where possible improving the existing public bus infrastructure will provide wider benefits for the community.</p> <p>We will work with schools to promote active travel and where feasible introduce school streets to reduce congestion at school sites.</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 neighboring 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>See Resilient Wales and Prosperous Wales above for details of the climate and social / economic impacts of these proposals.</p>
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage, and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People</p>	<p>Free home to school transport is provided for statutory aged learners who wish to attend their</p>	<p>The potential impact of the proposals on the Welsh Language have been considered in Section 3 of this</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?
are encouraged to do sport, art, and recreation	nearest suitable or catchment Welsh medium school, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.	impact assessment and 3.22 and 3.23 of the covering report.
<p>A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances</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 that they can safely access their nearest suitable or catchment schools. The options if adopted will negatively impact on learners who live below the statutory distances of 2 and 3 miles as they will lose their entitlement to free home to school transport.	The potential impact of these proposals has been considered in Section 1 of this impact assessment. The respondents to the consultation expressed concern that the loss of transport would result in increased absenteeism. We acknowledge that reversion to statutory distances would impact on families with primary aged children as parents would need to accompany them to and from school. Secondary learners however should be able to travel independently, which could include walking cycling or public transport. Whilst parents / guardians hold the legal duty to ensure their children attend school, if the proposals are adopted the Commissioning Team will work with CYP officers to monitor absenteeism levels and where necessary put arrangements in place to improve attendance levels.

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>Long Term</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, improvements to the walking infrastructure and public networks and the proposals to revert to statutory distance criteria. If adopted the proposals will generate circa £700k of revenue savings enabling the service to operate within allocated budgets.</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 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 an annual Transport Policy provides a framework for how decisions will be made.</p>
 <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 continues to work with the Commissioning Unit and operators to identify opportunities to improve the public bus network for learners.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation process will be presented to Cabinet and will inform the final drafting of the 25-26 Home to School Transport policy.</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>Involving those with an interest and seeking their views</p> <p>Involvement</p>	<p>The Council is undertaking a consultation process over a 6-week period. All parents/guardians of existing users, schools and operators have been contacted to make them aware of the consultation. A press release was issued at the start of the process and we will continue to issue regular social media updates reminding community members to respond.</p>	<p>Feedback from the consultation process will be presented to Cabinet and will inform the final drafting of the 25-26 Home to School Transport policy.</p>
 <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 journey. 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 feedback will be provided to Cabinet and used to inform the drafting of the policy.</p>

6. Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions have 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 additional learning 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 safeguarding 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 2014

Welsh Government LTM Review March 2024

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

Llwybr Newydd: the Wales transport strategy 2021

Local Transport Strategy

Consultation Responses

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?

This evaluation 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 consultation has evidenced that most respondents would prefer that the existing arrangements are retained. The financial impact however of maintaining the discretionary proposals are continuing to escalate and the Council is faced with increased financial pressures and the need to make substantial savings.

It is acknowledged that if the proposals are implemented it will impact on households who will lose their transport provision from September 2025. The Council has already implemented changes to public transport timetables to make public transport a viable solution for secondary learners, it is also continuing to develop and improve active travel networks which can support walking and cycling journeys for all learners. Discretionary arrangements will continue to be available for those with evidenced medical need and we will continue to offer transport to Welsh medium and faith schools, albeit the distance eligibility criteria will be amended.

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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
Report the findings of the consultation to Cabinet	11 th September 2024	Head of Service
Publish Home to School Policy 25-25	30 th September 2024	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
5.	Cabinet decision to adopt Transport Policy 24-25	September 2023	

6.	Public Consultation on 3 options for Home to School Transport Policy 25-26	July – August 2024	Feedback compiled into a Cabinet report
7.	Cabinet decision whether to adopt options	11 th September 2024	