



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

# Home to School Travel Policy 2020

## Consultation Document

Date of issue: **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

Action required: Responses by **Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019**

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## Why is the Council consulting on a proposed new home to school travel policy?

All Councils in Wales are expected to have a home to school travel policy that sets out how they provide travel assistance and this should be reviewed regularly.

The Council's current policy came into effect on 1st September 2017. This policy has been reviewed and the Council is now seeking the views of stakeholders on the proposed new policy.

The Council, like all others in Wales, continues to be affected by reductions to their funding. Therefore the Council must review all services and consider options to reduce expenditure and/or increase income by reconfiguring, cutting or reducing the services the Council provides. In terms of home to school travel arrangements the Council must consider if it can continue to provide travel assistance beyond what it is required to do so under its statutory obligations and where there is a charge made, if this charge is correct. The review of the Council's current home to school travel policy contributes to the Council's wider budget strategy by making the most efficient use of resources and ensuring the travel assistance provided is cost effective.

<b>Financial Information 2018-2019 on home to school travel costs</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
Primary Education - In County	£889,692
Primary Education - Out of County	£ 67,402
Secondary Education - In County	£ 1,655,636
Secondary Education - Out of County	£250,524
Special Educational Needs - In County	£ 2,926,793
Special Educational Needs - Out of County	£130,626
Special Educational Needs Post 16 - In County	£ 208,521
Special Educational Needs Post 16 - Out of County	£20,212
Post 16 - Out of County	£ 1,783
Post 16 - In County	£ 5,859
Transport Service Delivery	£29,766
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>£6,186,815</b>

The proposed new policy also provides clarification on what criteria is used to determine whether there is an entitlement to home to school travel assistance.

Home to school travel falls into two categories, **statutory** and **discretionary**. The Council offers entitlement to home to school travel arrangements via a **statutory offer** (the arrangements the Council needs to make by law to enable free travel for those who are entitled) or a **discretionary offer** (the arrangements made by the Council due to choice rather than a requirement).

At present the Council has a legal responsibility (**the statutory offer**) for making free travel assistance to and from a place of learning available for:

- all learners receiving primary education (aged 5-11) living two miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated
- all learners receiving secondary education (aged 11-16) living three miles or further from home to their nearest suitable school or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated
- all learners who attend a specialist provision and cannot walk to school because of their additional learning need / special education need, disability or where there are no suitable/available walking routes, even if the distance is less than those stated above
- all learners who are a Looked After Child by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

At present the Council provides free travel assistance under a **discretionary offer** for:

- learners attending a Voluntary Aided (Faith) school which is the nearest suitable provision and the distance criteria is met.
- learners attending a Welsh-medium school which is the nearest suitable provision and the distance criteria is met.

There are currently no requirements to provide free home to school travel arrangements for learners who:

- are not of statutory school age - this includes nursery aged children as well as post 16 students
- are not attending their nearest suitable school

## **The proposed new policy**

The **proposed** new policy is attached under Appendix A. It is proposed that if the changes go ahead the new Home to School Travel Policy will be introduced as at **1st September 2020**. The proposed new policy complies with all the statutory duties placed upon the Council.

The new policy sets out how the Council will provide assistance with home to school travel, however, parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that their child gets to school, including accompanying them if necessary.

This policy provides additional detail and explanation and it is hoped that these details will provide parents/carers with a clear understanding of what is eligible and what is not eligible when considering if their child or young person is eligible for home to school travel assistance.

The proposed policy confirms that although the Council is responsible for providing travel assistance for children and young people living within the Council area, there is no automatic entitlement. This includes mainstream learners and learners attending special schools.

The proposed policy also confirms that where an offer of travel assistance has been made and accepted, there is no continuing absolute entitlement as offers are subject to review if there is a change in the circumstances which gave rise to the original offer e.g. if there is a change of address or a previously deemed unsuitable route becomes available.

The following provides details of what is being proposed:

### **Statutory home to school travel**

There is no change to the arrangements under the new proposed policy:

- those learners of compulsory school age who attend **their nearest suitable** school and who meet the distance criteria will continue to be eligible for free home to school travel.
- those learners who attend their nearest suitable school but where there is no suitable walking route, regardless of distance, will continue to be eligible for free home to school travel.
- Those learners who are Looked After Child by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- those learners with additional learning needs/special educational needs who attend

**their nearest suitable** specialist provision according to their needs and who meet the distance criteria will continue to be eligible for free home to school travel. Or a learner with a relevant need, disability or mobility issue who lives within the walking distance of their nearest suitable school but who cannot reasonably be expected to walk, even if accompanied, to school because of their need, disability or mobility issue.

### **Discretionary home to school travel**

There is no change to the arrangements under the new proposed policy for:

- learners attending Voluntary Aided (Faith) schools, if attending the nearest suitable school according to their denominational preference
- learners attending Welsh-medium schools, if attending the nearest suitable school according to their language preference

It should be noted that in some instances learners may not be attending their nearest school according to their preference for Welsh-medium educational provision and this consultation document includes consultation with those parents who chose to send their child to a specific Welsh-medium school which may not necessarily be the closest to their home address. Under the new proposed policy, as from September 2020 there will be no travel assistance offered to those learners who are not attending their nearest Welsh-medium school, meaning that any current arrangements will cease as the choice will be deemed to be a parental preference.

### **Parental Preference**

The new policy stipulates that where a pupil is not attending their nearest suitable school due to the parent/carer choosing to send their child to an alternative school which is further away than the nearest suitable educational provision; this will be classified as a parental preference and there will be no entitlement to travel assistance. This includes learners attending mainstream schools and learners attending special schools.

## **The changes that are being proposed under the new policy**

### **Post 16 young people with Additional Learning Needs/Special Educational Needs (ALN/SEN)**

The proposed new policy states that those young people who have previously held a statement of educational needs and who may have previously attended a specialist provision but who **do not** transfer to a post 16 specialist provision will not remain eligible for home to school travel assistance.

### **Spare Seat Scheme**

The Council operates a Spare Seat Scheme which allows those learners/students who are not entitled to free home to school travel assistance the opportunity to purchase a spare seat, where one exists.

The new policy increases the charge of a spare seat. It is proposed that the charge for a spare seat will be the same for all learners and students, the new charge will be £390 per academic year. This represents a payment of £130 per term (£2 per day / £1 per trip based on a 195 school day academic year). This increases from £260 for nursery and compulsory school aged learners and from £100 for post 16 students. The change is so that all spare seats will be charged the same. The increase in cost is to bring the charge in line with other bordering Councils and the price of purchasing a ticket on public transport if purchased via a bus pass.

Post 16 students are able to purchase a Student Pass with First Cymru which equates to £3.25 per day (£633.75 per year based on 195 school days per academic year). Post 16 students may also be entitled to apply for an Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) through Student Finance Wales and could be eligible for an award of £30 per week following a financial assessment.

Charges by other Councils -

Swansea - £425 per annum or £460 per annum if paid for over 10 months

Bridgend - £380 (from September 2019)

Powys - £390 for under 16's and £525 for over 16's.

It should be noted that a spare seat will still be withdrawn, if the space on the route is needed for a pupil who is eligible for free school travel.

## **Dual Residence**

The new policy confirms the arrangements for home to school travel assistance entitlement for those learners who live at more than one address (dual residence) e.g. they live with one parent Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and their other parent Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The policy confirms that as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, only assistance to the nearest suitable school will be offered or continued, provided the distance criteria is met e.g. no entitlement from one address as the learner lives within the statutory walking distance of their school but second address does qualify as it meets both the distance criteria plus the nearest suitable school criteria. There will be no absolute entitlement from multiple addresses.

Under its discretionary powers, the Council will consider applications for travel assistance for those learners with dual residence, if the school is the nearest suitable school to one of the addresses and the second address does not qualify but there is existing home to school transport provision available on the route (this would be via the purchase of a spare seat).

Further, if neither address is the correct address to qualify under the nearest suitable school criteria, there will be no entitlement to home to school travel assistance for either address as this becomes a 'parental preference' choice.

## **Motability Scheme**

The new policy makes reference to "Motability Scheme" vehicles and states that if a child or young person is the recipient of the relevant allowance to qualify for the "Motability Scheme" and the parent/carer obtains a vehicle through the scheme, then the Council expects that the vehicle be used for the benefit of the child/young person and used to transport the child/young person to and from their educational provision. In some cases, the Council may offer assistance. In these circumstances, each case will be considered on its own merit and usually a parental mileage allowance will be offered.

## **Two-Stage Appeal process**

The new policy makes a change to the previous appeals process and introduces a "two-stage" process. Stage one is a review by the Council's Transport Group and if the appellant wishes to move to stage two of the process, this will involve review by an appeal panel.

### **Types of travel assistance offered**

The Council must ensure that it makes best use of public funds and this means ensuring the most cost effective method of travel assistance. The proposed policy sets out what types of travel assistance may be offered. This means that the offer of a particular type of travel assistance will not be an absolute entitlement if following a review a more cost effective method is found.

The proposed policy confirms that single occupancy vehicles will not be provided unless in very exceptional circumstances this is because a single occupancy vehicle is not always the best and most cost effective type of travel assistance available.

In addition, the proposed policy confirms that learners/students who have successfully completed their independent travel training will be expected to travel to and from their place of learning independently e.g. by pass for a public bus.

### **On-line applications**

The new policy makes reference to the fact that applications for home to school travel assistance should be made online. This is to ensure both an efficient and cost effective service.

## What will it will mean if the changes go ahead?

- A pupil/student may no longer be eligible for travel assistance under the new policy
- A pupil/student may still be eligible but the type of travel assistance offered may not be the same as they currently receive
- A pupil/student will need to pay more for a spare seat
- The Council reserves the right to withdraw travel assistance, giving notice, if a learner ceases to be eligible or immediately if the learner has falsely applied and if appropriate recoup any costs as a result of the false application.

## What will the Council do to provide support following any changes?

- The Council will ensure that any decisions are based on an assessment of the child or young person and their needs
- If the Council introduces a cut-off date it will make sure that sufficient advance notice is given
- The Council will give parents/carers time to make alternative arrangements if travel assistance is no longer being provided

The following table shows examples of what the proposed changes may mean:

	Current Arrangement	Change
<b>Post 16 student</b> (English-medium)	Attends Neath Port Talbot Group College	no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £100 to £390
<b>Post 16 student</b> (Welsh-medium)	Attends YG Ystalyfera	no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £100 to £390
<b>Post 16 student</b> (Faith)	Attends St Joseph's RC School & 6 <sup>th</sup> Form	no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £100 to £390
<b>Post 16 student with ALN/SEN in specialist provision</b>	Students who continue to attend a specialist provision and where a travel assistance entitlement has existed previously	travel assistance offered
<b>Post 16 student with ALN/SEN not in a specialist provision</b>	ALN/SEN students who previously held a statement/individual development plan who are transitioning to a non-specialist provision	no travel assistance offered

<p><b>Secondary pupil</b> (English-medium) Age 11-16</p>	<p><b>Pupil A</b></p> <p>Attends English-medium secondary which is their nearest school but they live over 3 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil B</b></p> <p>Attends English-medium secondary but it is not their nearest secondary education provision (Parental Preference)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>
<p><b>Secondary pupil</b> (Welsh-medium) Age 11-16</p>	<p><b>Pupil C</b></p> <p>Attends YG Ystalyfera which is their nearest school for Welsh-medium secondary provision and they live over 3 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil D</b></p> <p>Attends YG Ystalyfera but it is not their nearest secondary education provision for Welsh-medium secondary provision (Parental Preference)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>
<p><b>Secondary pupil</b> (Faith) Age 11-16</p>	<p><b>Pupil E</b></p> <p>Attends St Joseph's RC School &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Form which is their nearest school for Faith secondary provision and they live over 3 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil F</b></p> <p>Attends St Joseph's RC School &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Form but it is not their nearest secondary education provision for Faith secondary provision (Parental Preference)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>

<p><b>Primary pupil</b> (English-medium) Age 5-11</p>	<p><b>Pupil A</b> Attends English-medium primary which is their nearest English-medium school but they live over 2 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil B</b> Attends English-medium primary but it is not their nearest English-medium primary education provision (Preferred Placement)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>
<p><b>Primary pupil</b> (Welsh-medium) Age 5-11</p>	<p><b>Pupil C</b> Attends Welsh-medium primary which is their nearest Welsh-medium school but they live over 2 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil D</b> Attends Welsh-medium primary but it is not their nearest Welsh-medium primary education provision (Preferred Placement)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>
<p><b>Primary pupil</b> (Faith) Age 5-11</p>	<p><b>Pupil E</b> Attends Faith primary which is their nearest Faith school but they live over 2 miles from the school or no suitable walking route exists</p> <p><b>Pupil F</b> Attends Faith primary but it is not their nearest Faith primary education provision (Preferred Placement)</p>	<p>travel assistance offered</p> <p>no home to school travel assistance will be offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390</p>
<p><b>Nursery pupil</b> (English-medium) Age under 5</p>	<p><b>Pupil A</b> Attends English-medium nursery provision within English-medium primary which is either their nearest suitable school or a preferred placement</p>	<p>no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390 (pro rata)</p>
<p><b>Nursery pupil</b> (Welsh-medium) Age under 5</p>	<p><b>Pupil B</b> Attends Welsh-medium nursery provision within Welsh-medium primary which is their nearest suitable school or a preferred placement</p>	<p>no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390 (pro rata)</p>

<b>Nursery pupil (Faith)</b> Age under 5	<b>Pupil C</b> Attends Faith nursery provision within Faith primary which is their nearest suitable school or a preferred placement	no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390 (pro rata)
<b>Learners with ALN / SEN</b> Age 11-16 and Age 5-11	Attends their most suitable specialist provision and due to their need, disability, mobility issues they are unable to walk, if their most suitable provision is under the distance criteria. (this may include nursery aged children for assessment at a specialist provision for pre-school children)	travel assistance offered
<b>Learners with ALN / SEN</b> Age 11-16 Age 5-11 under 5	Attends a specialist provision via a parental preference	no travel assistance offered possible increase in charge for the purchase of a spare seat from £260 to £390 (or pro rata)

Some learners with ALN/SEN who are of compulsory school age have their needs met within a mainstream setting but with prescribed support (confirmed on their Statement/Individual Learning Plan). For these learners travel assistance will be considered on an individual basis.

## The Consultation Process

An important part of the process, when considering any change, is to gauge the views of stakeholders. The purpose of this consultation document is to outline the **proposed** changes, under a **proposed** new policy. This document has been prepared to provide stakeholders with information about the new proposed policy and allow stakeholders the opportunity to have their say.

This consultation exercise is being undertaken so that the Council receives stakeholders views on the proposed new policy and the responses to the consultation will help to inform the Council when making any decisions in relation to the policy. Following the conclusion of the consultation period all comments received will be presented to the Council's Cabinet Board and all views expressed will be taken into account when the Cabinet Board Members make any decision.

If it is decided to implement the proposal, unchanged, the new Home to School Travel Policy will come into effect on the **1st September 2020**. If it is decided not to go ahead with the proposal, it may be that an alternative proposal may be sought.

The timetable below sets out what will happen and when it will happen:

What	When
Consultation begins	<b>Monday 10th June 2019</b>
Consultation ends	<b>Sunday 4th August 2019</b>
Proposed implementation date for new policy	1st September 2020

**(Please note that any response received after the above date will not be considered)**

## How to respond

The Council is asking stakeholders to answer the questions and provide their views via an on-line survey. The Council is able to provide paper copies of the survey and accessible formats of the survey on request. Please e-mail your request to [education@npt.gov.uk](mailto:education@npt.gov.uk) (please title your e-mail 'Home to School Travel Consultation') or telephone 01639 763226 with your request.

**On-line Consultation Survey** – Stakeholders are able to access the Council's consultation portal which allows stakeholders to comment on the proposed new policy. Click here to access the online survey: [Home to School Transport Consultation](#) or go to the consultation section of the Council's website: [www.npt.gov.uk](http://www.npt.gov.uk)

**Events** - For those consultees who wish to take the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed new policy, consultation drop-in events will be held, no prior booking is required. The following events have been arranged:

When	Where
12pm – 2pm    17 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	Port Talbot Civic Centre Committee Room 3
4pm – 6pm    20 <sup>th</sup> June 2019	
12pm – 2pm    2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019	Neath Civic Centre Committee Rooms A&B
4pm – 6pm    2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2019	

## Who is being consulted

- Learners and their parents/carers
- Schools and Colleges
- Careers Wales
- Other educational providers
- Transport Operators
- Other NPT Directorates e.g. Social Services
- Welsh Government
- Bordering Local Authorities
- Other organisations involved with home to school travel assistance within Neath Port Talbot
- Anyone else who has an interest in the proposed new policy

## **Appendix A – Home to School Travel Policy 2020**