

Ken Skates MS
Cabinet Secretary for Transport & North Wales

Cc. Lynne Neagle MS
Cabinet Secretary for Education

14 July 2025

Consultation on Learner Travel Operational Guidance 2025

Dear Ken,

We are currently undertaking an [inquiry into routes into post-16 education and training](#). Transport has been one of the most regularly cited barriers to participation across the evidence we have received.

We note that you [launched a public consultation](#) on the revised Learner Travel Operational Guidance on 11 June 2025. We do not believe that the Welsh Government is proposing significant changes to the guidance as it relates to post-16 learner travel. We would therefore like to take this opportunity to share with you a summary of the evidence we have received about transport for learners seeking to continue their education and training after Year 11 (see annex A).

We hope that this evidence will highlight to you the very significant transport barriers that many learners face across Wales, and the extent to which these barriers shape what they choose to do after Year 11.

We hope to publish our final report during the autumn term. Given the wealth of evidence that we have received on the topic, learner travel is likely to feature predominantly in that report. We recognise that the Welsh Government is currently taking action that will affect the travel available to learners after they finish compulsory schooling, such as the pilot of £1 cap on single bus fares for young people, and the introduction of the Bus Services (Wales) Bill. Our discussions about transport as a barrier to post-16 education and training have taken into account that wider context.

If you would like any more information about any of the issues raised in this letter and annex please don't hesitate to contact the Committee clerks.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS

Chair

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Annex A: Evidence gathering about learner travel as a barrier to participation in post-16 education and training during our 'Routes into post-16 education and training' inquiry

We have heard frequent concerns about the impact of transport for learners on post-16 participation. Careers Wales told us that the cost and reliability of transport is an issue for learners across Wales.¹ Colegau Cymru stressed to us that transport is "probably the biggest single financial challenge and practical challenge that a lot of learners face".² They drew on Welsh Government data, which has found that 41% of 16 to 24 years olds identified transport as being the number one barrier to getting a new course, training or a job.³ Others, including Estyn, reported that transport can drive learners' post-16 decisions, particularly in rural areas.⁴ The NASUWT set out clearly the choices facing many learners:

"So, to move to an FE college or similar provision will invariably involve further distance to travel, a longer distance to travel, and a change in the dynamics of getting to that place, staying in that place and so on and so forth ... It can be a barrier to some pupils who are making a decision based on certain factors, if the decision they have is, 'Well, I can stay in my local school 3 miles away, or I can travel every day on the 6 o'clock bus in the morning to the FE college 20 miles away; I know what choice I'm going to make.'"⁵

Concerns from stakeholders related to both the cost and availability of transport. On cost, some stakeholders noted the variation across local authorities and across colleges in the level of financial

¹ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **6 February 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 264; **Written evidence: RET 37 Individual**

² Children, Young People and Education Committee, **26 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 195

³ **Written evidence: RET 34 Colegau Cymru**

⁴ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **29 January 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 201 (Parents' Voice in Wales); **Written evidence: RET 45 NPTC Group of Colleges**; Children, Young People and Education Committee, **5 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 235 (Estyn); **Written evidence: RET 17 Careers Wales; Written evidence: RET 14 Welsh Government Association (WLGA) and Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW); Written evidence: RET 10 Grŵp Llandrillo Menai; Written evidence: RET 05 The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT)**

⁵ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **29 January 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 35

assistance they provide to learners.⁶ Estyn reported “heightened concern” among college leaders in relation to recent and proposed changes to learner transport arrangements within certain local authorities.⁷ Others stressed the impact of the cost of transport on learners from low-income families in particular.⁸

Some stakeholders were optimistic about the impact of the £1 bus fare cap for young people on improving the affordability of travel.⁹ Others, however, stressed that the availability of travel is also a major concern, particularly for apprentices who need to travel where employers are based, and learners whose vocational courses extend beyond office hours.¹⁰ Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol told us:

“As one who comes from a very small village in rural Carmarthenshire, Llanboidy, where a bus goes once a week to the nearest town, leaving at 10 a.m. and returning at 2 p.m., that isn't practical in terms of enabling a pupil to access any provision. So, it impacts schools and colleges alike in some areas. So, it's important to look at both issues.”

They, and others, pointed out that the £1 bus fares would not help learners who need to travel by train, in areas where “those bus operators just don't exit”, or if you're travelling on trains “that have been cancelled and have to swap three, four or five times”.¹¹

We also heard that some groups of learners are disproportionately affected by travel challenges. CYDAG explained that whereas colleges are typically located close to transport hubs, Welsh-medium 6th forms can be difficult to access. They explained this can pose practical and financial barriers for some learners wanting to continue their studies through the medium of Welsh.¹² Others shared

⁶ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **5 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 235 (Estyn); **Written evidence: RET 34 Colegau Cymru**; **Written evidence: RET 32 Welsh Language Commissioner**; **Written evidence: RET 45 NPTC Group of Colleges**

⁷ **Written evidence: RET 24 Estyn**

⁸ **Written evidence: RET 10 Grŵp Llandrillo Menai**; **Written evidence: RET 31 Gower College Swansea**

⁹ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **26 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 95 (WLGA)

¹⁰ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **13 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 194 (Cambrian Training); **Written evidence: RET 23 Horticultural Trades Association**

¹¹ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **26 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 199 (ColegauCymru); Children, Young People and Education Committee, **13 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraphs 90-91 (Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol); Children, Young People and Education Committee, **6 February 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 422 (National Training Federation for Wales); Children, Young People and Education Committee, **13 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 198 (Educ8 Training Group)

¹² Children, Young People and Education Committee, **13 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 87

similar views.¹³ Careers Wales told us that learners with ALN sometimes can't attend their desired post-16 provision because sometimes "the availability isn't there".¹⁴

Most of the solutions to the transport challenges facing learners that we heard centred around providing free transport for learners. The Welsh Language Commissioner, the Children's Commissioner, ColegauCymru and others called for a nationally funded travel entitlement for young people aged 16-18 in education or work-based training courses.¹⁵

¹³ **Written evidence: RET 18 Children's Commissioner for Wales; Written evidence: RET 32 Welsh Language Commissioner**

¹⁴ Children, Young People and Education Committee, **6 February 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 265

¹⁵ **Written evidence: RET 32 Welsh Language Commissioner; Written evidence: RET 18 Children's Commissioner for Wales**; Children, Young People and Education Committee, **26 March 2025, Record of Proceedings**, paragraph 207 (ColegauCymru); **Written evidence: RET 10 Grŵp Llandrillo Menai**