

Scrutiny Investigation Report

Post-16 Further Education Transport

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[Gwynedd Council Overview and Scrutiny Pages](#)

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN

Post-16 transport is a matter that has been raised several times by members of the Council and the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group. The members raised the matter at the Communities Scrutiny Committee's annual workshop after receiving the comments and concerns of the learners/students and their families. The main concerns were the inconsistency in the cost of post-16 transport, the ability to pay for transport costs, the travelling distances, the inflexibility of the service and the fact that the Welsh Government does not give the same attention to underprivileged people compared with England.

Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee considered a brief for the research and decided to conduct a scrutiny research on the issues where it could realistically influence. As a result, research was undertaken into how the Authority's Post-16 Education Transport Policy is implemented at grass roots level in secondary schools and further education colleges, and the effect of its implementation on providers of post-16 education, the learners and their families. Interviews were conducted with secondary school heads and colleges, Careers Wales and the staff from the Council's Education Department. In addition, surveys were conducted with students via an online questionnaire and at several face to face events.

During the investigation a number of common threads and shortcomings in the existing post-16 transport provision were identified for which recommendations and suggestions have been included in the report.

In September 2014, a request was made by the Cabinet Member for the brief of the scrutiny investigation to be extended in order to consider further options to identify savings, as the post-16 transport service cannot continue in its current state because of the financial recession. This meant having to consider more creative options and recommendations for providing the service in the future. The request was welcomed as an opportunity to add value to the investigation with emphasis on placing the customer at the centre of the service.

As a result of extending the brief of the original investigation, the report was laid out in two sections with the recommendations from the investigation at the bottom of each heading. The more creative options together with the recommendation are on pages 43 - 45. A summary of all the recommendations can be seen in the Executive Summary.

We wish to convey our sincere gratitude to the learners/students who attended the focus groups on the sites of Coleg Menai Bangor, Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Pwllheli and Dolgellau and to Clywed – the voice of children, young people, parents and their families. We also wish to thank the learners/students and their families who completed the questionnaire. We wish to thank the Learning Services Managers of the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group, the Head teachers of Y Moelwyn, Y Berwyn, Botwnnog and Brynrefail secondary schools, and the Officers of Careers Wales.

Thank you for the support of the Council's Cabinet Members and the Council officers who assisted with the work.

Councillor Stephen Churchman
Chairman of the Scrutiny Investigation Group

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scrutiny Investigation was established by the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2013 in order to assess:

- How the Authority's Post-16 Education Transport Policy is implemented in the county's secondary schools and further education colleges
- The impact of implementing the Post-16 Education Transport Policy on post-16 education providers, learners and their families

And specifically to:

- detail the implementation and impact of the Authority's Post-16 Education Transport Policy on secondary schools, further education colleges, learners and their families in Gwynedd.
- establish an understanding of the impact of any change to the Post-16 Education Transport Policy on the Authority, secondary schools and further education colleges, learners and prospective learners and their families in different areas of the county.

In September 2014, the Cabinet Member requested for the brief of the scrutiny investigation to be extended in order to consider further options to identify savings, as the post-16 transport service cannot continue in its current state because of the financial recession. This means the need to consider more creative options /recommendations for providing the service in the future. The request was looked upon as an opportunity to add value to the investigation with emphasis on placing the customer central to the service.

As a result of extending the brief of the original investigation, the report was laid out in two sections with the recommendations from the investigation at the bottom of each heading. The more creative options together with the recommendation are on pages 43 - 45. A summary of all the recommendations from the original investigation together with the recommendations on the more creative options can be seen below.

It should be remembered that this report is a snapshot in time of the scrutiny inquiry if not otherwise stated.

Consideration was given to background information from different sources, in order to establish an understanding of the national and local context before commencing the scrutiny investigation. Interviews were held with Cabinet Members, relevant officers from the Council and the Head teachers of three secondary schools, Student Services Managers for Coleg Menai Bangor and the Area Manager for Careers Wales.

The effect of implementing the Council's Post-16 Transport Policy on the learners and their families was considered by gathering the opinions of learners/students and their families through various means of questioning. Three Focus Groups were held with learners / students on the following sites – Coleg Menai Bangor, Coleg Meirion Dwyfor in Pwllheli and Coleg Meirion Dolgellau. Views were gathered from unemployed people using a questionnaire and the support of the Careers Office in Porthmadog. Support was also

received from Clywed to gather the voice and opinions of the young people, their parents and their families. The records of complaints/calls received by Galw Gwynedd on behalf of the Service were considered and analysed.

Consideration was given to the Council's communication procedures with the post-16 education establishments and with the learners, students and their families, along with the communication arrangements of the education establishments and Careers Wales with the learners, students and their families.

We also considered the other work that the Council is undertaking, which is the appointment of a provider from the Education Consortium Office to coordinate learners' travel between schools and colleges for their post-16 education courses in the areas of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The report of the company 'EDGE public solutions' was considered, who have reviewed the Council's transport services' operations during May and June 2014.

Main Matters

1. Suitable and purposeful arrangements for travelling back and forth to further education, that are flexible in order to address new educational needs, and which ensure equal opportunity for learners.
2. The inconsistency of the Policy – the provision and the arrangements across Gwynedd.
3. The administration of transport tickets and the means of paying for travelling costs, and the payment methods.
4. Catchment areas and their travel arrangements. In accordance with the Statutory Guidelines, 'local authorities must take into account the fact that the travel arrangements they make in light of an assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, the journey should not take an unreasonable amount of time and that journey must be safe.'
5. Personal and purposeful information using various methods.
6. General communication and engagement.

Findings

1. It was found that there are a number of difficulties with travelling back and forth to further education. The main messages were:
2. Days are very long, with some students saying that they do not get home until after 7pm and others arriving at the college an hour and a half before the college starts in order to get there in time for their lessons.
3. 38.2% of the learners receive the education maintenance allowance.
4. The first term is very difficult for some because they do not receive the maintenance allowance for at least six weeks after courses have started – the evidence that they are attending a further education course.
5. Colleges record the reasons for students leaving, but there is no firm evidence that travel is a problem as transport is likely to be recorded under the heading 'financial reasons'.
6. It is not possible for the majority of learners/students to have access to a quarter of the courses available in Gwynedd and Anglesey as the transport service does not enable this.

7. The inflexibility of the travel pass. The travel pass which costs £60 or £100 is only available for learners/students to travel to a further education establishment in the morning and then travel back home in the afternoon.
8. The ticket does not allow the user to do what it states on the ticket – which is to travel back and forth to further education. For example, students who finish after half a day must wait until the end of the day if they wish to use the travel pass, or they must pay to go home earlier. This cost is in addition to the £60 that has already been paid for a travel pass. Students who finish their course at 7pm cannot use the travel pass.
9. Lack of clarity regarding the use of the travel pass from the driver and the steward of the train, Galw Gwynedd, the students and their families.
10. Passes can take time to arrive, especially for the first term, compared with students in Anglesey who receive their pass on the day they pay for it.

Summary of the recommendations

- 1. In order to improve the benefits for learners/students and their families, reduce the processes and in the spirit of the Gwynedd Way, there should be closer collaboration and negotiation with the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group to be an agent for Gwynedd Council**
- 2. The Post-16 Transport Policy should be reviewed to secure a suitable and purposeful policy to address the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 and the Learner Travel – Statutory Provision and Operation Guidance, June 2014**
- 3. The foundation of working in partnership with various organisations to arrange a bespoke service should be built on**
- 4. We should have a purposeful Post-16 Transport Policy that considers the students/leaners and their families' means to pay for transport costs**
- 5. Consistency is needed in the provision and the arrangements across Gwynedd, in order to give everyone an equal and fair opportunity**
- 6. The catchment areas should be reviewed to reduce the travelling times and distances for leaners/students in accordance with the Learner Travel Statutory Guidance**
- 7. Post-16 education providers need to collaborate to put systems in place to collect data to find out whether travelling costs lead to students dropping out of further education**
- 8. Appropriate customer care indicators should be set for the service**
- 9. We must secure the joint understanding of the further education providers and Galw Gwynedd of Gwynedd Council's Post-16 Education Transport Policy**

- 10. In the spirit of the Gwynedd Way, it must be ensured that users' questions are answered on their first contact**
- 11. Gwynedd Council and the post-16 education providers must collaborate closely to provide consistent, relevant and purposeful information for learners and their families using various and suitable methods that ensure an equal opportunity for everyone**
- 12. Recommendations on the more creative options for providing the service in the future**
- a. The procedure needs to be in place by Easter if it is decided to implement any change in September 2015. We must also remember that the first year saving for the Council would be savings from September 2015 – 31 March 2016.**
 - b. Based on the evidence found during the scrutiny investigation, it is recommended that a combination of options should be considered. Options 3, 6 and 7 - changing to a ticketed system, transferring the service and the administration of college transport tickets to Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group.**
 - c. Based on the evidence found during the scrutiny investigation, the same price should be set for everyone.**
 - ch. It should be ensured that the service offers an equal opportunity for college students and learners in secondary schools.**
 - d. Financial loans should also be provided to purchase a vehicle / motorbike in order to facilitate access to further education and training.**
 - dd. We should continue with the good practice of the provision of peripatetic teachers / lecturers and build on the foundation of working in partnership, and review regularly.**
 - e. An impact assessment should be undertaken on any proposal to change the transport provision, and ensure that the final decision is based on those assessments.**

13. Other Matters for Consideration by the Cabinet Member

The Welsh Government Draft Budget for 2015-16 includes the following under the heading 'Educational Attainment':

- A two year agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats which will see the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) rise from £918 to £1,050 in 2015-16 and then again to £1,150 in 2016-17 and extending the PDG to nursery aged children in both years; and
- A new Youth Concessionary Fares scheme for 16-17 year olds starting in September 2015

The Council and its partners need to understand the different profiles of learners in the years before transferring from the school to further education. It is recommended that the Council, the Education establishments and Careers Wales improve the support for young people prior to and during the transition from school to further education.

The Council, the educational establishments and Careers Wales need to collaborate closely to avoid duplication of work and ensure that there is support for the learners/students from the appropriate establishment.

14 Reporting back to the Communities Scrutiny Committee

The members of the Scrutiny Investigation appreciate that any action will be a matter for the Cabinet Member, however, the members would appreciate a report back on his response to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting with a progress report in six months' time.

2. Purpose of the Scrutiny Investigation

2.1 Since the adoption of the [Post-16 Transport Policy](#) the elected members of Gwynedd Council and representatives of the [Llandrillo Menai Group](#) have stated their concerns at a meeting of the [Communities Scrutiny Committee on 26 March 2013](#). Members continued to state their concerns at a meeting of the [Communities Scrutiny Committee on 14 May 2013](#), and then in informal meetings and a preparatory meeting on 12 September 2013.

2.2 Members have noted the following concerns:

- inconsistency in post-16 transport costs
- the ability of learners/students to pay for transport costs
- travelling distance for learners
- the Welsh Government does not given the same attention to the underprivileged compared with England

2.3 In light of the discussions that took place on post-16 education transport at the Communities Scrutiny Committee on 14 May 2013, and subsequently in informal meetings between members and officers, and in the Preparatory Meeting on 12 September 2013, the intention to undertake a Scrutiny Investigation was approved.

2.4 A brief for the scrutiny investigation was submitted to the [Communities Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2013](#). The Cabinet Member explained that additional funding was not available for any changes to the service.

2.5 The brief states the need to assess:

- How the Authority's Post-16 Education Transport Policy is implemented in the county's secondary schools and further education colleges
- The impact of implementing the Post-16 Education Transport Policy on post-16 education providers, learners and their families

Specifically:

- detail the implementation and impact of the Authority's Post-16 Education Transport Policy on secondary schools, further education colleges, learners and their families in Gwynedd.
- establish an understanding of the impact of any change to the Post-16 Education Transport Policy on the Authority, secondary schools and further education colleges, learners and prospective learners and their families in different areas of the county.

2.6 Main Activity of the Investigation

2.7 In terms of the work, the intention of the Investigation was to seek a county-wide picture of the way in which the Post-16 Education Transport Policy is implemented, and the impact of the policy on post-16 education providers and learners in different areas of the county:-

a) Establish an understanding of:-

- Welsh Government guidance on post-16 education transport
- the post-16 education transport policy in Gwynedd and compare with similar policies in other counties in Wales
- the impact of implementing the policy on learners in all parts of the county
- the consistency of the post-16 education transport policy for learners in all parts of the county
- the accessibility of the transport provision for learners during core hours and outside core hours
- the affordability of the transport policy for learners and their families in different areas of the county
- the impact of any change to the post-16 education transport policy
- the impact of negotiating any contracts with post-16 education transport providers

b) Interview the following to identify the situation across the county:-

- Secondary School Head teachers (1 Arfon, 1 Dwyfor, 1 Meirionnydd)
- Heads of Student Services (Coleg Meirion Dwyfor – Pwllheli and Dolgellau Sites, Coleg Menai)
- Hold a Focus Group with post-16 learners in a secondary school and a further education college to discuss their use of post-16 education transport
- Hold a Focus Group with prospective post-16 learners in a secondary school and a further education college to discuss the likely impact of the current post-16 education transport arrangements on them
- Hold a Focus Group with the parents of post-16 learners in two areas in order to understand the impact of implementing the post-16 transport policy on families.

c) Draw-up recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for improving the consistency, accessibility and affordability of post-16 transport for learners throughout the county.

2.8 The following were consulted:

- i. Eluned Williams, Senior Ancillary Services Manager (Education), Owen Owens, Senior Manager Resources Service (Education) and Rhian Wyn Williams, Transport Coordinator (Regulatory Department) on the policy, arrangements and regulations in the post-16 transport field.
- ii. Mr Dewi Lake, Head of y Moelwyn and y Berwyn secondary schools

Mr Gareth Morris Jones, Head of Ysgol Botwnnog
Mr Arwyn Williams, Deputy Head of Ysgol Brynrefail

- iii. Mr Phillip Roberts, Learner Services Manager, Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group
Mr John Elfyn Gruffydd, Learner Services Manager, Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group
- iv. Mrs Sharon Williams, Careers Wales - Gwynedd and Anglesey Area Manager

- 2.9 Research was conducted on the practice of other authorities in this field.
- 2.10 The budgets for 'Transport between home and college for those between 16 and 18 years old' were compared. The number of learners 16-18 old in Further Education establishments across Wales and the family of similar councils. **(Appendix 1)**
- 2.11 Background information from different sources was considered for example, information from the 2013-14 Budget Book on college transport and school buses to Further Education; Welsh Government's 'StatsWales' on applications for Education Maintenance Allowance across Wales **(Appendix 2)**, the MALIC deprivation measure - indicator for the travelling time to Secondary School **(Appendix 3)**
- 2.12 The catchment areas and the distances learners/students travelled to further education.
- 2.13 Learners/students and their families were questioned using questionnaires and on-line questionnaires¹. The questionnaire was also used at the Urdd Eisteddfod with cards being distributed to promote the on-line questionnaire.
- 2.14 [Clywed](#) conducted meetings with two groups on our behalf, one group for learners and the other for their families by using the questionnaires.
- 2.15 The unemployed completed questionnaires at Porthmadog Carreers Wales office.
- 2.16 Focus groups were held at Coleg Menai Bangor, Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Pwllheli and Dolgellau sites.
- 2.17 The records of complaints/observations by Galw Gwynedd were considered and analysed.
- 2.18 The new Cabinet Member responsible for this field was invited to a meeting with the Scrutiny Investigation Group.

3. The National Context

- 3.1 [The Learner Travel \(Wales\) Measure 2008](#) (“the Measure”) by the Welsh National Assembly came into effect on 30 September 2008 and was approved by Her Majesty in the Privy Council on 10 December 2008. The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure sets a specific legal framework in relation to travel and transport provisions for learners travelling from home to school in Wales.
- 3.2 The Measure does not specify a time limit for journeys. However, section 2(5)(b) states that transport arrangements are unsuitable if they take an unreasonable amount of time. It is necessary for local authorities to assess the individual requirements of a learner when considering a reasonable amount of time for a journey. The new statutory guidance strengthens this point – see the following points.
- 3.3 In response to concerns raised by local authorities, parents and school governing bodies, the Minister for the Economy, Science and Transport announced a [consultation](#) on revising the Learner Travel Operational Guidance and an Appraisal of the Travel Code. The Minister also gave a commitment that she would ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to express their views on the issues that have an impact on them when travelling from home to school.
- 3.4 Following the consultation that took place between 13 January 2014 and 13 April 2014 [Learner Travel – Statutory Provision and Operational Guidance, June 2014](#) (“the guidance”) was published in June 2014. The Guidance was published by the Welsh Ministers under section 15 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008.
- 3.5 Under section 15 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, the Welsh Ministers have the power to submit statutory guidance. When the guidance is statutory, it is a requirement for local authorities to give attention to the guidance and they can only not conform to such guidance when they can provide justification for doing so.
- 3.6 The Measure refers to Transport for Learners who are not in Education or Compulsory Training – Post 16 Learners and states: “There is no statutory duty on a local authority to provide transport free of charge to post-16 learners who continue with their studies in further education or mainstream training.”
- 3.7 The Measure's Guidance notes: ‘The Welsh Government Policy is that the provision of transport for learners 19-25 years old is a matter of discretion for local authorities and Further and Higher Education establishments in Wales.’
- 3.8 The Learner Travel Statutory Guidance states
- that local authorities have to promote sustainable travel methods when they implement their function under the Measure as long as this is practically possible.
 - where learners are not eligible for free travel, local authorities have the power to provide transport in accordance with their own discretion.
 - local authorities have to consider the fact that the travelling arrangements they make, as a result of an assessment, should not cause any unreasonable level of stress

and the journey should not take an unreasonable amount of time and that journey should be safe.

- 3.9 The new Statutory Guidance states the following considerations that local authorities should pay attention to in relation to the travel provision for post-16 learners.
- a. When assessing what arrangements are required for post-16 learners it is recommended that a local authority should consider the need to ensure that learners have sufficient opportunity to choose between different establishments where education and training are provided. This sufficient choice should include enabling learners to choose an education establishment or training that is not nearest to their home if other factors are more important, for example course suitability.
 - b. It is also recommended that local authorities should consider the needs of people that are not in education, employment or training.
- 3.10 The view of the Welsh Government is that young people in rural areas should not be under any financial disadvantage as they may need to travel further to get the same education and training provision as their peers in urban areas.
- 3.11 In terms of the time it take to travel to reach and get access to a different learning establishment – it is recommended that young people should be able to reach their educational or training establishment without suffering the stress or difficulties that will cause them not to benefit from the education provided. For example, a young person should not have to change a public bus many times (or other form of transport) in order to reach the education or training institution, if this causes an unreasonably long journey. In this context, local authorities will need to consider what type of transport would be best to ensure a journey time that is reasonable. **Best practice suggests that a secondary age school child would be expected to travel for 60 minutes to school and back, to reach the educational establishment. It is recommended that the local authority should place similar expectations to post-16 learners.**
- 3.12 The Leaders and Chief Executives of Welsh Authorities have received a letter from Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM Minister for Economy, Science and Transport on 28 July 2014 stating:
- “I expect Local Authorities proposing changes to learner travel provision to undertake the necessary impact assessments of their proposals and to ensure that their final decisions on service provision are informed by those assessments”.**
- 3.13 The Welsh Government Draft Budget for 2015-16 includes the following under the heading ‘Educational Attainment’:

- Protecting schools funding by 1% above changes to the Welsh budget overall, meaning an additional £106m will have been provided to schools over this Spending Review period;
- Allocating an additional £12m to continue the Schools Challenge Cymru for next year;
- **A two year agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats which will see the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) rise from £918 to £1,050 in 2015-16 and then again to £1,150 in 2016-17 and extending the PDG to nursery aged children in both years; and**
- **A new Youth Concessionary Fares scheme for 16-17 year olds starting in September 2015**

4. The Local Context

4.1 Gwynedd Council Post-16 Transport Policy

4.2 Historically, transport provision was free of charge for learners over 16 years old who lived over three miles away from secondary schools and further education colleges.

4.3 Since September 2011, Gwynedd Council has adopted a 16+ transport policy. The former Policy (adopted on 20 July 2004) was revised for the following reasons:

- changes in course provision patterns for post-16 learners
- availability of the Education Maintenance Allowance for learners from less well-off households,
- enormous financial pressure on the Council's budget

4.4 The policy was based on the reduction in public funding allocated to authorities and lead to the prioritisation of education over the free transport provision. The policy expects all post-16 learners to pay towards the cost of school or college transport. Learners are expected to pay £60 a term or £100 a term for those who go to further education outside their catchment-area or who are older than 19 years old on 31 August.

4.5 The policy is based on a 'network' of transportation services – from a service bus, school/college bus, train, mini bus or taxi that will enable learners to reach relevant post 16 educational sites.

4.6 Since September 2011, every secondary school that provides for years 12 and 13 will be able to offer a full Local Curriculum which will meet teaching requirements. In some cases, the provision available will be offered at other educational establishments. In addition to transportation to the specific school at the start and end of each day, transport will also be available to/from any home on the network to/from related education establishments at the start and end of each school day. The same situation exists for the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group.

4.7 Young people aged 16-18 who are not in employment, education or training

4.8 Performance indicator DGD17 – '% of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training in Gwynedd' indicates a better performance than the Welsh average with the trend improving.

4.9 The [York University](#) report commissioned by the former Audit Commission in 2010, estimates that there is a cost of £56,000 throughout the lifetime of a person who is not in education, employment or training. The sum of £56,000 increases with welfare benefit payments, social justice, poor health and unpaid tax and national insurance, with £104,000 per person in addition due to the opportunities missed and work that would have been created.

4.10 ['Against the odds'](#) was published in October 2010 by the Audit Commission. It is a brief that highlights the main role played by further education colleges, 6th form colleges

and schools with 6th forms to assist young people to change successfully from secondary school to post-16 further education or training, to prevent young people from going into the category 'young people who are not in education, employment or training'.

4.11 **Review of the Operation of Council's Transport Services**

4.12 Gwynedd Council has commissioned '[EDGE public solutions](#)' to review the operation of the Council's Transport services that link in very timely with the 'National Assets Working Group' (NAWG) agenda and the findings of the Williams Report. The review was conducted between May and June 2014. The draft report by EDGE public solutions states:

"Given the requirement to control the number of NEET students and the fact that transport charges are already relatively high for the region we do not recommend any changes to this discretionary transport provision at this time."

4.13 The recommendation by EDGE is:

"Consider at a point in the future increasing the cost of the 16⁺ pass to £90 or £130 per term."

4.14 **Gwynedd and Anglesey Post-16 Education Consortium**

4.15 The Consortium has appointed a provider on a one year contract from August 2014 until the end of October 2015. The provider's brief is to coordinate learners' transport **between** schools and colleges for their post-16 education courses in the area of Gwynedd and Anglesey. The provider arranges transport with travel companies so that learners are able to travel **between** schools and colleges to study post-16 cooperative courses in Gwynedd and Anglesey during a **school day**. The brief for the provider includes arranging transport for learners at short notice, ensuring that the arrangements are cost-effective and offer the best value for money by adopting the procurement process of the Education Departments of Anglesey and Gwynedd Councils. The schools and colleges pay for this transport. The provider administrates payments and invoices between educational organisations and travel companies.

4.16 The five secondary schools in Anglesey send learners to Coleg Menai in Llangefni and Bangor along with learners who travel from school to school. The six secondary schools in Gwynedd with a sixth form send learners to Coleg Menai in Llangefni and Bangor along with learners who travel from school to school. The numbers are dependent on the learners' choice of courses at the beginning of each academic year. The Consortium receives reports on the number of learners travelling from each individual school on a monthly basis, the total travel costs per month for every school, an annual report with recommendations on how to reduce costs and improve the cost-efficiency and quality of the transport provision.

- 4.17 Significant work has been undertaken on organising collaborative sixth form courses in Gwynedd and Anglesey and the equivalent classes in Coleg Menai by agreeing on a common weekly timetable of blocks of times for the learners' options columns. Each establishment agrees on courses which will be Official Collaboration courses which will be part of the area's Curricular offer. Also, each establishment shares its post-16 options columns in order to promote and extend the learners' options where their subject choices are impossible in their home establishment. There are also annual discussions and steps for rationalising courses which are not viable in terms of numbers in order to create savings for establishments by centralising a specific course in one establishment. Decisions are made on the provider based on quality reports and historical results.
- 4.18 Research was undertaken to look at reducing the need to travel by adopting digital learning procedures and it is seen from the first analysis of the pupil questionnaires that there were clear messages. 93% agree / strongly agree that they should be prepared for the use of technology in higher education, 88% would appreciate being able to access digital learning resources, 89% (year 12) and 81% (year 13) would appreciate being able to use their digital device in lessons, a high percentage own various digital devices.
- i. The use of video-conferencing to hold Electronics and Psychology lessons was observed on the Llangefni Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor sites and exceptionally good teaching was seen and the students responded maturely and had clearly learned to work comparatively independently. There is local provision which is of a very high standard and consideration could be given to using these as centres of excellence in video-conferencing.
 - ii. There is support to the idea of using digital resources from all directions.
- 4.19 This research will end before Christmas with the work resulting in preparing a formal tender for commissioning teacher training work, promoting good practices and creating current resources in the field of e-learning. The packages will lead to savings as establishments use them in order to maintain provision in the home establishment but through a mixture of traditional lessons, e-learning packages for independent learning, video-conferencing packages with mobile teachers rotating each establishment and presenting the lesson from each establishment in turn.

4.20 Local Area Summary Statistics – Gwynedd 7 August, 2014

Some of the high level summary of the [data](#) published on 7th August 2014 states the following:-

Economy

- In 2013 the employment rate in Gwynedd was 70.1 per cent. This was the ninth highest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities.

- Gross Value Added (GVA) per head in 2012 stood at £15,360 in Gwynedd. This equals the Welsh average and is the eighth highest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities.
- In 2012 Gross disposable household income (GDHI) per head in Gwynedd stood at £13,874 and was the sixth lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. Between 1999 and 2012 GDHI per head in Gwynedd has been below the Welsh average.
- In 2013 average weekly earnings in Gwynedd stood at £491. This was the fifth lowest amongst the 22 Welsh local authorities. In 2003, 2008 and 2013 earnings in the Gwynedd have been below the Welsh average.
- In 2012 Gwynedd had the seventh lowest rate of children living in workless households amongst the Welsh local authorities.

Education and skills

- The percentage of working age adults with no qualifications has fallen since 2001. In the latest year being within 1 percentage point of the Welsh average and having one of the 10 lowest rates amongst the local authorities.
- The percentage of working age adults with qualifications at NQF level 4+ has risen since 2001. In the latest year being within 3 percentage points of the Welsh average and ranking in the top 5 of the local authorities.
- The attendance rate has risen since 1999. It was above the Welsh average in 2013.

Environment

- The ecological footprint in Gwynedd was above the Wales average in 2006.

4.21 Finance and Financial Support

4.22 The Council's Budget

4.23 The post-16 transport budget is near to £1,000,000 and Gwynedd Council's intention is to subsidise 80% of the post-16 transport costs to further education and receive the 20% back as a fee. The income target is £199,000

4.24 The 2014-15 Budget Book shows a transport budget for further education under the heading 'Budget not in the Individual Schools Budget'. It is seen that

- 'College Transport' is £170,740
- 'School Buses' – Further Education is £747,090
- 52% of the Cambrian Railway budget £28,160

4.25 Actual income for the sale of passes in 2013/14 was £174,328 with Gwynedd Council subsidising the remainder of the cost to the learners/students.

4.26 Financial Assistance

4.27 The Guidance for the new Learner Travel Measure refers to the following financial assistance available to pay/contribute towards the transport costs of those in post-16 education.

- The [Education Maintenance Allowance](#) was introduced as an incentive for young people from low income homes to remain in education or full time training beyond the age of compulsory education. It is available for learners who attend a school or college. The Education Maintenance Allowance is a weekly allowance of £30, subject to an income assessment, to assist students with the cost of further education. It is paid every two weeks directly into the student's bank account.
- The Assembly Learning Grant is available for 19 year old learners or older, who are in Further Education.
- The Welsh Government also provide assistance to those students who face hardship, via the Financial Reserve Fund distributed to further and higher education establishments in Wales.
- **The Maintenance Allowance, Assembly Learning Grant and the Financial Reserve Fund can be used, amongst other things, to pay for transport costs or contribute to them.**
- There are situations whereby local colleges and the relevant local authorities provide financial assistance for travelling for those in post-16 education.
- Every local authority will have its own post-16 transport policy and it will be the responsibility of the learner or parent/learners parents to check the websites of individual local authorities for specific details.

5. Comparisons with Welsh Authorities

- 5.1 The National College Transport Budget Levels Comparisons for 2013/14 figures show Gwynedd Council's college transport budget as £893,000 and the budget per comparison unit is £394.26 (**Appendix 1**). These figures rank Gwynedd Council 3rd amongst the family of similar authorities and 4th in Wales in terms of the budget (Anglesey Council is second).
- 5.2 Data from authorities Revenue Account forms for 2013/14 were used. Figures were based on a net basis of specific grants and did not include capital costs. Non-financial data used was 'Number of 16-18 year old Learners in Further Education Establishments'. Statistics of Further Education, Work-based Learning and Community Learning in Wales.
- 5.3 A number of Welsh authorities are reviewing their post-16 transport policy this year, e.g. Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.
- 5.4 Anglesey County Council charge £60 per annum, transport is free in Conwy County Council and in Powys County Council.
- 5.5 Some authorities in Wales charge more than Gwynedd Council. For example, currently Neath County Borough Council charge £270 per annum and Newport Council give a grant of £150 towards the cost of a student travel card of £576 per annum.

6. Administration

- 6.1 The Education Department gives money to the Integrated Transport Unit to prepare contracts and to review the numbers on the buses every term.
- 6.2 Galw Gwynedd¹ sells the travel passes to post-16 learners on behalf of the Education Department. Galw Gwynedd deals with enquiries and travel passes sales including administration of applications that are received over the internet and applications to change pass details/deal with lost passes. Galw Gwynedd's target for issuing passes is three days, however, there is an arrangement during the autumn term where a period of two weeks 'grace' is allowed. During the other two terms, passes will be processed on the following day. Galw Gwynedd also receives complaints/observations and records these on the computer system. Galw Gwynedd bills the Education Department for this service.
- 6.3 There is a different system for learners in Special Schools. The Education Department writes directly to the learners in Special Schools. Learners in Special Schools do not purchase travel passes via Galw Gwynedd- it is the Integrated Transport Unit that bill the individuals directly.

²Galw Gwynedd is Gwynedd Council's Telephone Contact Centre

6.4 Coleg Menai used to administer the passes on behalf of Gwynedd Council when they were free of charge up to September 2011.

6.5 The advantage of the current Gwynedd Council system for the student is

- To be able to receive a discount if he/she decides to undertake further education in their catchment area.

An advantage for the Council is that

- Galw Gwynedd administrates and deals with enquiries on behalf of the Education Department.
- Protects the catchment area.
- Record of observations and complaints.
- Reviews the numbers who travel every term.

6.6 We were told that Coleg Menai (Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group) work as an agent for Anglesey Council. It was understood by the Education Department, Anglesey County Council that they ask for £60 per annum for Coleg Menai, with the College then charging an administration fee of 7.5% for the sale to the Council. The work includes collecting the money and paying the Education Department directly. Coleg Menai sends an invoice to Anglesey Council for 7.5% of the sale less £60.

6.6.1 Passes for Anglesey Council school children are administrated by the Council and it was reported that the system in question was troublesome. A very plain pass for school children.

6.7 The advantages of the current Anglesey Council system for the student are

- they receive a pass on the day.
- discussion is with one establishment rather than two or three.
- pass states the buses the student can use it for travel.

An advantage for the authority is that

- the arrangement is less troublesome as a many resources are required to undertake the work.

An advantage for the College is that

- there is a secure record of who travel on the buses to support the health and safety aspect on the buses.

6.8 Recommendation to the Cabinet Member

In order to improve the benefits to learners/students and their families, reduce the processes and in the spirit of Ffordd Gwynedd, there should be closer collaboration and negotiation with Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group to be an agent for Gwynedd Council.

7. Impact of Implementing the Post 16 Transport Policy on Education Providers – Secondary Schools

- 7.1 We were told that it was necessary to clearly define the geography of the catchment areas.
- 7.2 We heard that some learners/students travelled great distances that meant long dreary work days for them. Despite the long dreary work days for those who travel great distances the Secondary Schools had not heard any complaints.
- 7.3 It was reported that the parents made their own arrangements rather than to depend on County Council arrangements. If it is dependent on the goodwill of parents, then it is not an equal opportunity.
- 7.4 It was heard that Secondary Schools pressed learners to make an application for the Education Maintenance Allowance and that it was necessary to identify a cohort of pupils who pay less. It was suggested that those pupils who receive free school meals /Education Maintenance Allowance and/or grant should have free transport.
- 7.5 It was suggested that the policy should be more flexible as school hours had changed over the years with additional activities being organised in order that pupils could go home at lunch-time.
- 7.6 The funding that Arfon Secondary Schools receive as 14-19 Network grant to promote collaboration to ensure more viable classes is under threat from the Welsh Government. This funding goes towards paying the travel costs of learners to a course at another educational site. The £60 and £100 travel ticket is available for learners to travel to school in the morning and back home in the afternoon only. With courses that finish after 5pm the arrangement in Gwynedd is that the taxi returns the learner to the mother school and the learner makes their own arrangement home from there.

7.7 Recommendation:

- a) **The Post-16 Education Transport Policy should be reviewed to**
- **ensure a suitable and purposeful Policy**
 - **ensure a flexible service to meet the new requirements of education and give equal opportunity to learners.**
 - **ensure that the learners/students do not travel large distances for further education**
- b) **The foundation of working in partnership with various organisations to arrange a bespoke service should be built on**

8. Impact of Implementing the Post 16 Transport Policy on Education Providers – Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group

- 8.1 We were told that 16 buses arrive at the colleges every day throughout Gwynedd, Anglesey and Conwy with 12 different bus companies under contract. There are 40 travel routes in all. The Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group deals with three different policies.
- 8.2 Every student accepted on a course is referred to the Students Services and receives appropriate information.
- 8.3 The fact that the post-16 travel costs and the arrangements in Gwynedd Council are different to those of the Councils of Anglesey and Conwy creates a feeling of inequality in the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group.
- 8.4 The College hears from students about the difficulties they have to pay the costs at the start of the autumn term as they do not receive the Education Maintenance Allowance until at least six months into the course.
- 8.5 The College has to target students who have difficulty and it was reported that more from Gwynedd convey that they have problems to the College and it is not possible to currently analyse these problems.
- 8.6 Sometimes travel is a factor, however there is no firm evidence that this is the main reason. The Colleges record the reasons for a student leaving, however, transport is likely to be recorded under the heading / option 'financial reasons'.
- 8.7 It was reported that the number of unemployed between 18 -25 was increasing in Gwynedd.
- 8.8 Every College throughout Wales receives a sum of funding every year based on demography and the economic position, namely the Reserve Finance Fund. The money is specifically for a category to assist with travel costs, materials, child care etc. which enables the colleges to give a third of the annual travel cost (£60) to those assessed as having difficulty. The college give the first payment to overcome problems to those who have financial difficulties.
- 8.9 The Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group has no access to information regarding those who travel from Gwynedd.
- 8.10 Inflexibility with travel time (at the start and end of the day) create difficulties and a long day for students. A long day and timetable is bound to have an impact on the level of attainment/ results and absences may be as a result to long days.
- 8.11 The College has received a request for help from a parent to solve the problem of the inflexibility of the service as their child is a carer for the parent.

- 8.12 It was reported that it would be easier to the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group to work as an agent for Gwynedd as this would ensure a better role for the colleges and that students receive their passes on the day they pay for them.
- 8.13 Gwynedd passes do not state the buses the student can use for travel and this creates problems.
- 8.14 There is less flexibility in Gwynedd in terms of catchment areas compared with Anglesey Council.
- 8.15 There is awareness amongst the students of the differences between the counties.
- 8.16 The Coleg Menai Group has a good relationship with the Council's Transport Department.
- 8.17 The commitment of the students from south Meirionnydd to education is to be applauded.
- 8.18 The Arfon Partnership is good practice however there is no equality. Consistency is required.
- 8.19 It is necessary to ensure that relevant and purposeful information is shared with students and parents.

8.20 Recommendation:

- a) **There should be a purposeful and more flexible Post-16 Education Transport Policy that**
- **considers the ability of the learners/students and their families to pay for transport costs**
 - **gives consideration to travel times, the natural catchment areas and the distances learners/students travel**
 - **Gives everyone equal and fair opportunities**
- b) **There should be negotiations with Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group to be an agent to Gwynedd Council in order to simplify the system for processing and administering travel passes.**
- c) **Consistency is required in the provision and arrangements across Gwynedd.**
- ch) **Relevant and purposeful information needs to be shared with the learners/students and their families.**

9. Impact of Implementing the Post 16 Transport Policy on Education Providers – Careers Wales

9.1 [Careers Wales](#) communicates and works with young people across the six authorities in north Wales and assists them when making decisions. Careers Wales is the first point of contact that hears about the difficulties of those who drop out of education.

9.2 Careers Wales shares information with students if transport is a factor in their choice of course.

9.3 Careers Wales have heard a number of comments by learners in Porthmadog. Here are a few examples:-

- The 'local' Dwyfor college is in Dolgellau although Caernarfon and Bangor are closer to them but they have to pay £100 if they wish to go outside the catchment-area.
- The days are very long with some students saying that they don't get home until after 7pm.
- It is noted that it isn't possible for the majority of learners/students to have access to a quarter of the courses available in Gwynedd and Anglesey as the transport service cannot make this possible.

9.4 Concern was expressed that the transport costs of Gwynedd Council or Anglesey Council so not consider the ability to pay.

9.5 It was also noted that the Policy is not consistent, for example the system for Secondary Schools in Arfon works well as the schools pay transport costs via the [partnership](#) system but this does not occur in other areas. Some Arfon Secondary Schools pay travelling costs for the pupils and others are free of charge. There needs to be equal opportunities for learners.

9.6 The Area Manager for Careers Wales said it would be easier to work with one establishment that distributes the travel passes.

9.7 The following points were received from the advisors:-

- i. One of the advisors is concerned that clients in Penllyn are forced to travel to Dolgellau (40 miles) for vocational courses when in some cases such as Trevor it is closer to travel to Menai (22 miles) but they still need to pay £100. This is the same story for Nefyn and such areas. However, getting home from Bangor/Llangefni /Caernarfon is much quicker because the 12 bus doesn't leave Caernarfon until 17:21 and clients are not allow to use alternative routes or buses to get home. Some clients are not reporting getting home until well after 7pm. This makes the average day

much longer than average working day of most employees. This makes the 18:00 curfew of the travel ticket very difficult to work to.

- ii. Another example of this is clients coming from Harlech since the bridge has been closed. There have been concerns from parents that students are exhausted and missed days due to the excessive travelling times encountered by students. I am informed that the bus coming to Porthmadog on some days can take an hour. Some clients miss the connection and can not return home because of the times disallowed on the ticket. You can not use the ticket before 13:00 as you know. Same issue as above returning home.
- iii. Gwynedd currently does not fund travel outside of Gwynedd. What happens in this case to Students who live in Bala and wish to study Landbase courses in Llysfasi, the closest college. At the moment they are relying on a space being available on the bus or having to pay to stay over in the college as daily travel is pretty much impossible.
- iv. Whilst on the issue of Glynllifion are you aware that students from Meirionnydd, for example Harlech, have to go from Harlech to Oakley Arms, change in Porthmadog, change in Penygroes and then to College and the same thing going home. There used to be a minibus but this has been cut back at the expense of the students time.
- v. A student wishing to study Motor Vehicle Engineering living in Tywyn or Dolgellau have to travel either to Llangefni or Newtown, neither of which is physically possible using the bus service. But even if a student were to take the easiest option of Newtown, Gwynedd will not support them with travel.
- vi. It is not possible for most Meirionnydd Students to access a quarter of the courses available within Gwynedd and Mon because the buses do not make it possible and it takes a massive amount of travel time. Even in these instances Gwynedd have not been open minded about letting young people access courses outside of Gwynedd with financial support for travel. Examples of the courses that far South Gwynedd cannot realistically access in this area are Electrical Engineering, Marine Engineering, Welding, Motor Vehicle Engineering, Stone Masonry, most land based courses (unless they can afford to stay or hit the grant criteria), Game Development, IT Practitioner, Music, Performing Arts, Travel and tourism, Creative Media, no level 2 sport and so on. This limits choice and narrows horizons.
- vii. A final concern was that because of the restrictions places on which buses and when those can be accessed means that some students who may choose to stay on to work are unable to do so.

9.8 Recommendation:

- a) **There should be a purposeful and more flexible Post-16 Education Transport Policy that considers the ability of the learners/students and their families to pay for transport costs**

- b) There is a need for a Post-16 Education Transport Policy that is consistent throughout Gwynedd.**
- c) The catchment-areas need to be reviewed to reduce times and travelling distances for learners/students in accordance with the Statutory Learner Travel Guidance that states**
 - local authorities have to consider the fact that the travelling arrangements they make, as a result of an assessment, should not cause any unreasonable level of stress and the journey should not take an unreasonable amount of time and the journey should be safe.**
- ch) Equal opportunities should be ensured for learners/students.**
- d) Post-16 Education providers need to put systems in place to gather data to find out if travelling costs lead to students dropping out of further education.**

10. Impact of Implementing the Post 16 Transport Policy on Learners and their Families

10.1 Results of Questionnaires in May and June 2014

- i. The results of the questionnaires indicate that the inflexibility of the service causes difficulties for learners/students and their families.
- ii. 21 questionnaires were completed by learners/students (**Appendix 4**) and 32 by the families of learners/students (**Appendix 5**) during May and June 2014.
- iii. In response to the question 'Did travelling costs influence the choice of school/college/course?' 17 answered 'Yes/Yes to an extent' and 28 said 'No' and 8 did not answer the question.
- iv. 26 pay more on top of the travel pass every week with 2 doing this every day, the additional cost varies from less than £2.50 per day to more than £10 a day.
- v. It was seen that the majority of those who completed the questionnaire said that they travelled by bus or a bus with a transport travel pass and did this because this was the only choice they had.
- vi. When asking for information that was received prior to leaving school and by whom, the results show that a little over a half said that they did not receive information.
- vii. The results also show that the majority had received information that it was possible to make an application for financial assistance via the college, with 16 saying that they did not get the information from anyone.
- viii. In response to the question 'How convenient is the provision?', 9 answered that the provision is very convenient/convenient. 13 answered that the provision was fairly convenient/not convenient and 4 stating that the provision is not convenient at all and 1 had not answered.
- ix. These are some of the reasons for stating that the provision is not convenient:-
 - a. "She has had to move to Nefyn (staying with friends and family) as reaching Porthmadog to catch the bus is so difficult. Walking to Penrhyn is not an option as she would have to leave so early, and the road is very dangerous."
 - b. "The travel pass is only eligible at certain times – my child has had to pay full adult charge for travelling at times e.g. following choir practice, lectures being changed or cancelled! One time my daughter was sent off a bus as her pass was not valid and she had no money and therefore she had to wait in Pwllheli for three hours!!"

- c. "College closes at mid-day on Wednesday however they cannot use their travel pass until 4.30pm (the usual bus)"
- ch. "I have to pay if I want to go home early. I can only use bus 8.07 or 9.07 in the morning and then 16.40 and 17.40 in the afternoon if I use my travel pass."
- d. "The travel pass is not valid on other buses only on one in the morning and in the afternoon and on some days I have no lessons and therefore I have to stay around doing nothing in order to wait for the afternoon bus, or pay £3.50 for another bus, which is very expensive if I do this weekly!"

dd. "£60 is very expensive".

- x. It was understood that the family of a learner at a Special School had received a late bill for Term 1 (during Term 2) last year and had refused to pay saying that he/she would have transported his/her own child if he/she knew the cost of transport at the start of the educational year.

10.2 Result of Clywed Questionnaires

- i. A group of 8 people came to discuss with Clywed - 7 parents and 1 learner from the Arfon area. The 6 travelled with a bus and 2 with a parent or other adult.
- ii. In response to the question: 'Did the travelling costs influence the choice of Course/college/school', 3 responded 'Yes/Yes to an extent'. Only one had purchased a travel pass for £60.
- iii. Regarding receiving information prior to leaving school, 5 said that they did not receive any information regarding transport, the cost or how to apply for financial assistance. One stated that he/she had received information regarding transport but had not received information regarding the cost or the financial assistance available. Another stated that he/she did not know. Two received information from the school, one from a parent and another had found the information on the 'Wales Students Finance' website.

10.3 Results of Careers Wales, Porthmadog Questionnaires

- i. The number of questionnaires completed at the Careers Wales Office in Porthmadog was 14. 8 from Dwyfor area, 4 from Meirionnydd area and 2 from Arfon area.
- ii. The results of the questionnaires indicate that 4 had been travelling between 10 and 20 miles, with 2 travelling between 30 and 50 miles.

- iii. 6 were travelling with the Council's travel ticket because this was the only choice they had.
- iv. The results of the questionnaires show that 12 out of the 14 had gone on to further education with 6 having completed their course, 4 had not and 2 did not answer the question.
- v. noted that the travelling costs had not influenced their choice of course/school/college.
- vi. 5 responded to the question 'How convenient was the provision for you?', with 3 saying that the provision was very convenient/convenient. Here are the reasons noting why the provision was not convenient:
 - a. "It was fairly convenient but once Padarn buses left, there was no college bus which made me at least 30 minutes late which affected my EMA."
 - b. "Distance – Connections. I am in Llangefni travelling from Morfa Nefyn. Not getting to college until after 11am due to bus leaving early. Pay more than £10 a day due to connections."
- vii. It was seen that 4 people pay more on top of the travel ticket every day with 1 person pay £10.
- viii. The 3 out of the 6 that responded, said that there was a college course they wished to attend but it was not available locally.
- ix. When asking for information that was received prior to leaving school and by whom, the results show that a little over a half said that they did not receive information.
- x. The results show that 6 had received information that it was possible to make an application for financial assistance via the college, 3 from the Careers Office, 2 from the school, with 2 saying that they did not get the information from anyone.

10.4 Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group

A. Coleg Menai, Bangor

- i. Twelve students were invited to a Focus Group at the Ffriddoedd Road Site, Bangor on 2 October 2014. Five students from Coleg Menai Llangefni attended the Focus Group. One was the Student's Union Representative, three were students from Arfon and one was a student from Llanfairfechan.
- ii. The journey for some students that live in Gwynedd and attending Coleg Menai Llangefni is very long and means a change of bus on the way. Most were of the opinion that the bus drivers were likeable and friendly. Late buses create great problems to the students.
- iii. A comment was made that the service is expensive compared to £60 a year in Anglesey and that the travel ticket does not allow flexibility for students to travel at any time of the day.
- iv. One of the students was a mother to a small child and was paying £100 a term as she was over 19 years old. A comment was also made that there wasn't a reduced rate for students over the age of 21 years old.
- v. The students were asked to prioritise the main matters that needed attention in order to improve the service and the following were noted respectively:-
 - a. There is a need to cut the costs in order to create a fair system for all.
 - b. Need to review the bus pass service - age and cost.
 - c. Need to review the times that the bus pass can be used to go to and from college.
 - ch. Need to review the method of paying for a bus pass.
- vi. Comments from the students:
- vii. "I pay £5.80 extra to attend a work placement once a week."
- viii. "Starting from home at 8.10am and arriving at the College at 9.10am with half an hour of this time going on picking up students from Bangor."
- ix. "Since Padarn Buses stopped there are less buses and they are all at inconvenient times." (comment by the Student Union Representative)
- x. "I have to pick up my child at 5.30pm. If I miss the bus or if the bus is late – the child minder goes over her time."
- xi. "Gwynedd Council does not provide bus passes for anyone not living in Gwynedd."

B. Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Pwllheli

- i. Twelve students were invited to a Focus Group at the Pwllheli site with nine students present. The students used the train and bus to go back and forth from the college. Seven of the students were fairly satisfied with the service with two not happy at all. Most of the students were travelling between 10 and 20 miles with one travelling 29 miles from Dyffryn Ardudwy.
- ii. All the students made the comment that they weren't allowed to use their bus pass on every bus and they had to pay an adult price to go home earlier when on half days at the college. This cost is on top of the cost of the travel ticket. The students need flexibility so that they can use the ticket at convenient times.
- iii. The college closes at half day every Wednesday. Some students are on half day courses twice a week. The attitude of the drivers of the other buses is nasty and threatening.
- iv. Arriva runs the buses and the train but does not allow students to use the travel ticket on the bus and the train – one or the other is the choice. The train does not run at convenient times. The attitude of the train steward is very poor and refused to take the train pass on the first week to college.
- v. Students have to wait around for hours in every weather.
- vi. The students were asked to prioritise the main matters that needed attention in order to improve the service and the following were noted respectively:-
 - a. Need to be able to use the bus pass on any bus and at any time to go to and from college.
 - b. Need to be able to use the same pass to travel on the train and the bus.
 - c. Change the attitude of the public service buses and the train steward.
- vii. Comments by the students:
- viii. "Finish college at 4.30pm but the train does not leave until 5.45pm"
- ix. "Bus No. 8 to the college is too early – reaches Pwllheli an hour and a quarter before the college starts. Bus No. 9 usually arrives too late therefore I am late arriving at college"
- x. "Do not know how much to pay when I am on half day as some drivers charge £2.20 and others charge £3.50 for the same journey. Why the need to pay for every connection? The drivers do not seem to understand the policies."
- xi. "Other bus drivers' attitude is disgusting – except the college bus."

- xii. "Only one college bus to Dolgellau - there are no public buses at the appropriate time."
- xiii. "Not every bus goes to my village – Tremadog and there isn't a bus stop with a roof there."
- xiv. "The bus service instead of the train service last year was poor. Had paid for a bus pass but the services was available for free!"
- xv. "Need to consider getting a purposeful bus that only transports students to the college in the morning."
- xvi. Students told us that they had received travel information at the time of their registration at the College.

C. Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Dolgellau

- i. Twelve students were invited to the Focus Group at the site in Dolgellau . Ten students were present with most of them using a bus to go back and forth to the College travelling between 10 to 25 miles with one travelling 47 miles from Morfa Nefyn.
- ii. The class of students studying 'Beauty and Hair' had prepared a number of comments beforehand. Level 3 students begin their course at 1pm and finish at 7pm and therefore they cannot use their bus pass.
- iii. A number of comments were made on the cost being expensive and not everybody can afford the cost as some were not in receipt of the education maintenance allowance and not every parent could afford to maintain their children through college. A comment was made on the fairness of the fact that some paid £60 and others had to pay £100 is very unfair. A comment was also made on the fact that there is no reduction in price for students over the age of 21 years old.
- iv. The first term is difficult as the education allowance maintenance does not arrive until after the first month and there is no grace period for those who register at a later date.
- v. Students were very concerned about their safety on the Blaenau Ffestiniog bus as it was overcrowded. It was also noted that there was bullying on the bus.
- vi. Although the pass notes the right to travel back and forth to the College, the bus pass does not allow students to travel at the times their courses finish.
- vii. The students who were at the college for a block of 14 weeks were very angry that they had to pay for a bus pass every term even though they weren't attending the college every day. Some students suggested a scheme that would allow students to pay per day instead of every term.
- viii. The students were asked to prioritise the main matters that needed attention in order to improve the service and the following were noted respectively:-
 - a. The cost was excessive.
 - b. Need two buses for Blaenau Ffestiniog.
 - c. Need to be able to use the bus pass for travelling to and from College.

ix. Comments of the Students

- x. "The bus pass is expensive and £100 is excessive."
- xi. The service is not flexible - "It costs £1 to go home after 1pm although we have a bus pass. We have paid for a bus pass to be used to travel to and from college as noted on the bus pass but this is not possible." "The bus pass does not allow us to do what it says on the ticket." "The service is not flexible enough when we are on half days at the college." "Cannot use the bus pass on some buses."
- xii. "Not allowed to pay to go on the 502 college bus." "We are no longer allowed to pay daily on the bus and that forces some students to spend more than is necessary."
- xiii. "There isn't enough room on the bus, need two buses, there are not many buses, and around 10 students have to stand for 15 minutes and we have paid for seats." "Additional transport has sometimes been arranged when the bus was full but very rarely." "Students have been bullied on the bus."
- xiv. "Students over 19 years old on my course would have had to pay at least £20 more if they had paid for a bus pass."
- xv. "The course is at the wrong location." "Have to travel to Dolgellau for the building course as it is not available in Pwllheli."
- xvi. "Travel from Blaenau to Glynllifon for a course on Animal Care. Travel time was too long as there wasn't a direct bus. Have changed course and attend Dolgellau site after three weeks."
- xvii. "Easy way to travel." "There are consistent means of travel to the college." "Happy with the service that is provided." "Buses fairly often."
- xviii. The travel information was in the information pack from the College.

Recommendations:

- a) **A suitable, purposeful and convenient service should be provided for further education to ensure that it does not cause an unreasonable amount of stress and does not take an unreasonable amount of time in accordance with the Statutory Learner Travel Guidance.**
- b) **Purposeful customer care measures should be set.**

11. Record of Complaints/Observations

- 11.1 As has already been noted in point 7 under the heading 'Administration', Galw Gwynedd keep a record of complaints/observations on the Seibel system.
- 11.2 We analysed the 142 complaints/observations in the Galw Gwynedd records from January 2013 to December 2013 into several headings. The following headings became evident:
- i. Inflexibility of service (36)
 - ii. Questioning if the cost was correct (24)
 - iii. General enquiries (22)
 - iv. The numbers of comments/complaints between 1-5 in the remainder of the headings
- 11.3 The 100 complaints/comments **from May until December 2013** were analysed in the same manner. The same headings became evident during the busiest time as regards buying a ticket:
- i. Inflexibility of service (17)
 - ii. Questioning if the cost was correct (21)
 - iii. General enquiries (17)
- 11.4 The observations also show that Galw Gwynedd require more information if they are to be able to answer at the first call.
- 11.5 It appears that the learners are not aware
- o of the cost every time,
 - o of the system,
 - o the buses they are allowed to travel on and
 - o the times they can travel with the pass.
- 11.6 There have been 35 complaints from January 2014 up to 6th May 2014 with 6 complaints/comments on bus timetables, late buses and bus connections causing difficulties for learners.
- 11.7 It was understood that the Education Department were dealing with the comments/complaints and then noted this on the Seibel to close the record.
- 11.8 The following examples include the Galw Gwynedd analysis when recording the issues.
- 11.9 Examples of our analysis regarding the inflexibility of the service:-
- i. "***** has to leave very early on a Wednesday and work late on Thursday – has problems with the bus driver refusing to allow them to use the pass, even

with a letter from the tutor explaining why. Arriva – Llandrillo Dolgellau – Blaenau Ffestiniog on Wednesday 13.30 on a bus that leaves after 7 on Thursday.” Galw Gwynedd have recorded this issue under ‘Issues regarding the attitude of drivers’.

- ii. Student travelling from Porthmadog to Penygroes on a bus and then taking a taxi from Penygroes to Coleg Glynllifon. On the way home there is an hour wait in Penygroes for the college bus. ***** from the college has been on-line to ask if she can use the service bus. There are at least 10 students in the same situation. Porthmadog to Penygroes then a taxi from Penygroes to Glynllifon.
Galw Gwynedd have recorded the matter under ‘Taxi Transport’.
- iii. “****, ***** tried to get on the number12 Express Motors bus from Pwllheli yesterday and was told that he could not use his pass until 4.30pm. ***** went back to college and arrived home at 6pm having paid a £1 to the bus driver this time. Express Motors bus number 12 from Pwllheli.”
Galw Gwynedd have recorded the matter under ‘Matters concerning the attitude of drivers’.

11.10 Examples of our analysis to questioning if the cost is correct

- i. A Granddaughter of ***** needs to know why she has to pay £100 for her pass rather than £60. The course is not available in Pwllheli and the other students have paid £60. Can someone phone ***** back to explain please? Thank you.”
Galw Gwynedd have recorded the matter under ‘Pass Costs’.
- ii. “The caller is the father of *****. **** attended Coleg Glynllifon last term and has now changed to Parc Menai. He paid £60 last term to travel from Porthmadog. The system now shows a payment of £100 to travel to Parc Menai. Can you please phone the caller to confirm how much he should pay? Studying art.”
Galw Gwynedd has recorded the matter under ‘Travel Pass costs’.
- iii. Customer paid Galw Gwynedd £60 on 18/9/13. Siebel System says that the ticket should be £100 but the customer says that the hair and beauty course is only available in Bangor. Have told the customer he might have to pay the additional £40.”
Galw Gwynedd have recorded the matter under ‘Pass Costs’.
- iv. Caller phoned yesterday about her daughter ***** , who had received a discount from £100 to £60, therefore wanted to check that her son is also paying the correct amount (£100). Have explained to Mrs ***** that this is the correct price as her son is 20, but she wants assurance.
Galw Gwynedd have recorded the matter under ‘Pass Costs’.

11.11 Recommendation:

- a. A suitable, purposeful and convenient service should be provided for further education to ensure that it does not cause an unreasonable amount of stress and does not take an unreasonable amount of time in accordance with the Statutory Learner Travel Guidance.**
 - b. The joint understanding of the further education providers and Galw Gwynedd has to be ensured of Gwynedd Council's Post-16 Education Transport Policy.**
 - c. Relevant and purposeful information should be provided to learners/students and their families using varied and suitable methods.**
- ch) In the spirit of Ffordd Gwynedd, it should be ensured that users' questions are answered by their first contact.**

12. Communication and Collaboration

12.1 The new Measure states the following in terms of 'Publishing Information':-

'The statutory provision regarding Publishing Information and School Transport Policies for Parents states that the information has to be available by 1 October prior to the academic year that is relevant to the information.'

'Parents should be able to understand their options and any cost implications of the choice of school they make for their child. Accordingly it is recommended that local authorities provide parents with information about transport arrangements alongside, or as part of, the information made available about school admissions.'

12.2 Gwynedd Council Communication Procedure with learners and their families

12.3 Gwynedd learners/students currently receive information from many different Institutions and they are expected to contact Galw Gwynedd to purchase a travel pass, except for those who are in Special Schools.

12.4 Before learners leave school the Department of Education sends a standard letter to head teachers in secondary schools and colleges and the heads will share the letter with the learners.

12.5 The letter refers to how to apply and pay for a travel pass and refers them to the Council website for more information. The letter does not refer to financial assistance that may be applied for via Welsh Students Finance.

12.6 The Education Department website includes a heading schools and students with a sub-heading and a link to details of the 16+ Travel Pass and it is noted 'Students can apply to renew their 16+ Travel ticket for the autumn 2014 term from 11 August' but there is no reference to purchasing a new pass. Further relevant information for 16+ learners is available at the Education Department website with a link to the Welsh Students Finance website.

12.7 As previously stated under the heading Impact of Implementing the Post 16 Transport Policy on Learners and their Families, over half of those who completed the questionnaire in May/June say that they did not receive information prior to leaving school.

12.8 The results of the questionnaires also show that the majority had received information that it was possible to make an application for financial assistance via the college, with 16 saying that they did not get the information at all.

12.9 Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group Communication Procedure with learners and their families

12.10 Colleges share information on open evenings and contact schools directly.

They notify students of the transport system and distribute a timetable and a travel pass at the start of every term.

12.11 We were told that every student accepted on a course is referred to the Students Service and receives appropriate information.

12.12 Recommendation:

- a) **Gwynedd Council and the post-16 education providers need to collaborate closely to strengthen and reconcile the information provided for learners and their families.**
- b) **Relevant and purposeful information should be provided to learners/students and their families using varied and suitable methods that ensure equal opportunities for all.**

13. Understanding of the impact of any change to the Post-16 Education Transport Policy on the Authority, secondary schools and colleges of further education, learners and prospective learners and their families in different areas of the county.

13.1 If the authority resolved to amend the Post-16 Education Transport Policy and increase the charge for the travel pass then it would be necessary to conduct impact assessments of the changes to ensure that the final decision on service provision is based in accordance with the letter from Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM, Minister for the Economy, Science and Transportation.

13.2 It will be necessary to consider

- the impact on young people and their families
- their ability to pay
- Impact on the performance indicator, namely ‘% of young people 16-18 years old who are not in education, work or training’. The Gwynedd performance in 2013/14 is better than the Wales average performance with the tendency to show an improvement.
- the impact on further education institutions

13.3 The following are some of the options and their impact:

- I. Red Rover Ticket - If the learners/students purchased a [red rover ticket](#) then the cost would be £6.80 per day which means a cost of £32.50 per week to go to College/School.
The cost for the three terms for **school** learners would be 41 weeks x £32.50 = £1,332.50.
The cost for the three terms for **college** students would be 37 weeks x £32.50 = £1,202.50.
- II. Charge All the Same Price - Reviewing/charging the same price to all for a travel pass would lead to additional income for the Authority with a possible impact on some education institutions.
 - a. In 2012/13 2098 passes for £60 were sold and 429 passes for £100 which was an income of £168,780 to the Council.
 - b. In 2013/14 2185 passes for £60 were sold and 409 passes for £100 which was an income of £172,000 to the Council.
 - Based on the 2012/13 figures, by increasing the price to all to £80 there would be additional income of £33,380.00 to the Council. Based on the 2013/14 figures by increasing the price to all to £80 there would be additional income of £35,520 to the Council.
 - Based on the 2012/13 figures, by increasing the price to all to £100 there would be additional income of £83,920.00. Based on the

2013/14 figures by increasing the price to all there would be additional income of £87,400.

- Based on the 2012/13 figures by increasing the price by £20 (£80 & £100) the Council would have additional income of £50,540. By increasing the price in the same manner, based on the 2013/14 figures the Council would have additional income of £51,880.
- By increasing the price by 50% based on the 2012/13 figures the Council would receive additional income of £83,390. Based on the 2013/14 figures the Council would receive additional income of £73,730.
- If it is resolved to charge the same price to all then this may have an impact on the numbers who attend the College at Dolgellau.

III. Review the Catchment Areas - If the Authority reviewed the catchment-areas it is possible that this may have an impact on some of the Colleges.

IV. Free Transport Ticket for those that receive Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) - the Council's systems do not enable us to currently connect the numbers that receive EMA with the numbers that use the EMA to purchase a bus pass. The Assembly has also contacted the Council asking for this information and examining how to do this will be addressed by next educational year.

Based on the figures received from the Education Department: The number of 16+ passes were 1230 with 470 receiving EMA. The figures indicate that 38.2% of students/learners in further education receive EMA.

- On the 2012/13 scenario:
964 learners/students who went into further education purchased a pass for Term 1 and this includes 36 over 19 years old. In 2012/13 EMA was approved to 1,028 learners/students in Gwynedd.

On the assumption that half of the 946 learners/students in further education receive EMA the other half would need to pay ($482 \div £168,780.00 = £350.17$ per annum).

If $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 964 receive EMA (723) then 240 students would pay £703.25 per annum.

14. Extending the Brief - Further more creative options

- 14.1 The Cabinet Member's request to extend the brief of the scrutiny investigation was accepted in order to consider further options as the post-16 transport service could not continue in its present guise due to the financial situation facing the Council. This meant that Members of the investigation needed to consider more creative options / recommendations to deliver the service. The request was looked at as an opportunity to add value to the investigation with emphasis on placing the customer at the centre of the service.
- 14.2 There was a need to look to identify savings in the service by:
- Considering flexibility for the system with reduced funding
 - Transforming the existing transport system; and
 - That a process be in place by the 2015/16 school term
- 14.3 The group researched other authorities' practice and drew up a long list of options.
- 14.4 With the help of an independent facilitator, the long list of options was discussed and giving consideration to the alternative methods of providing the service against the following principles that were agreed by the scrutiny investigation group:
- Fairness for all
 - Open to all
 - Flexibility
 - Reasonable cost / affordable
 - Flexible travel time
- 14.5 The main options considered were:
- Arms Length Company
 - Local Transport Partnership
 - Council Buses
 - Scooter – loans
 - Loans to buy motor / bike car
 - Voluntary Sector Buses
 - Change to natural catchment areas
 - Peripatetic teachers/lecturers
 - Share resources across Council Departments
 - Transfer administration to the Colleges
 - Type of Ticket
 - Transfer the whole service to the Colleges
- 14.6 The options were prioritised in the following order:
1. Arms Length Company
 2. Peripatetic teachers/lecturers
 3. Type of ticket
 4. Loans
 5. Council Buses

- 14.7 The above options were assessed together with the option of Transferring Administration to the Colleges and the option of Transferring the Entire Service to the Colleges. The viability of the options, the potential savings, and the presumptions/risks were also assessed by the Strategic Policy Manager for Resources and the Senior Research and Analysis Officer (**Appendix 6**).
- 14.8 If a decision is made to implement any changes in September 2015, the procedure will need to be in place by Easter.
- 14.9 The assessments and the potential savings were considered, and it was seen that the options split into long terms ones, and into ones that could be implemented sooner. The option of having peripatetic Teachers / Lecturers has already been developed. We would need to do much more work on Option 1 and Option 5 – an Arm’s Length Company and the Council’s Buses, and these are viewed as options for the future. The Option of Transferring the Entire Service to the Colleges is viewed as an option that would take a long time to establish and the size of the saving would depend on the amount of contribution that would need to be made to the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group.
- 14.10 In terms of Option 4 – Loans, hypothetically some savings would be possible, but this would be dependent on the conditions of the loan (a lower interest rate as ‘bait’ would mean an additional cost against the saving) and the numbers taking the loan. Without a substantial number of students taking the loan, it would be unlikely to realise savings as the same transport would still have to be provided.
- 14.11 The realistic savings that would be certain to bring savings to the Council and address the users’ needs would be a combination of the following options:

Option 3 – the Type of Ticket

As the Council is paying the bus companies on the presumption that everyone who has purchased a ticket currently uses it twice a day, 5 days a week, it could be supposed that there would be a possible saving for the Council. Since the Council does not have information on the use of the tickets it is difficult to establish a definite figure for the potential saving. Assuming that 5% of the tickets would not be used at all, there would be a saving of around £38k in a full academic year.

This option would offer advantages for the students due to the flexibility of the ticket. It would make the purchase of a ticket more attractive to students, which would possibly make it easier to justify charging a higher price. Perhaps it should therefore be considered as part of a package of improvements to the system that would involve increasing the price, rather than as a stand-alone option.

Option 6 – Transfer the Administration of Travel Passes to the Colleges

If the Authority was successful in having the Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group agree to work as an agent as it currently does for Anglesey County Council, non-financial

benefits may be possible and there could be a small financial saving – approximately £3,912.

There would be advantages for the learners/students and their families and a release of officers' time in Galw Gwynedd and the Education Department Officer who deals with comments and complaints.

Option 7 - Transfer the Transport to College Service to the Llandrillo Menai Group

Savings will be possible, but a firm agreement will need to be negotiated with the Llandrillo Menai Group. The size of the saving would depend on the amount of contribution that would need to be made to the Llandrillo Menai Group.

Furthermore, this option offers the same advantages as the advantages for option 6 – Transferring the Administration of College Travel Passes, in respect of the students and releasing officers' time.

14.12 Recommendations

- a. The procedure needs to be in place by Easter if it is decided to implement any change in September 2015. We must also remember that the first year saving for the Council would be savings from September 2015 – 31 March 2016.**
- b. Based on the evidence found during the scrutiny investigation, it is recommended that a combination of options should be considered. Options 3, 6 and 7 - changing to a ticketed system, transfer the transport to college service and the administration of college transport tickets to Llandrillo Menai Colleges Group.**
- c. Based on the evidence found during the scrutiny investigation, the same price should be set for everyone.**
- ch. It should be ensured that the service offers an equal opportunity for college students and learners in secondary schools.**
- d. Financial loans should also be provided to purchase a vehicle / motorbike in order to facilitate access to further education and training.**
- dd. We should continue with the good practice of the provision of peripatetic teachers / lecturers and build on the foundation of working in partnership, and review regularly.**
- e. An impact assessment should be undertaken on any proposal to change the transport provision, and ensure that the final decision is based on those assessments.**

15. Other matters for the consideration of the Cabinet Member

- 15.1 The Welsh Government Draft Budget for 2015-16 includes the following under the heading 'Educational Attainment':
- A two year agreement with the Welsh Liberal Democrats which will see the Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) rise from £918 to £1,050 in 2015-16 and then again to £1,150 in 2016-17 and extending the PDG to nursery aged children in both years; and
 - A new Youth Concessionary Fares scheme for 16-17 year olds starting in September 2015
- 15.2 The Council and its partners need to understand the different profiles of learners in the years before transition from school to further education. It is recommended that the Council, Education establishments and Careers Wales improve the support for young people prior and during the transition from school to further education.
- 15.3 The Council, the educational establishments and Careers Wales need to collaborate closely to avoid duplication of work and ensure that there is support for the learners/students from the appropriate establishment.

16 Reporting back to the Communities Scrutiny Committee

The members of the Scrutiny Investigation appreciates that any action will be a matter for the Cabinet Member, however, the members would appreciate a report back on his response to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting with a progress report in six months' time.

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