

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS FROM THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Theme: Vacant Seats Scheme

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
1.1	"A waste of money having vacant seats."	The Council notes the comment.
1.2	"Children should only get a seat if they live away from school but it should be cheap."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.</p> <p>An Equality and Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.3	"Some parents like me, who have become incapable of driving, need to take their children to school when they live further away."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>

1.4	"Our child benefits enormously from the vacant seats scheme. It teaches responsibility and gives our son independence. As parents, it allows us to continue working and avoid care costs or missing work to drop-off to and pick-up from school. It also reduces the compulsion of relying on grandparents for more than just supervision."	The Council notes the comment.
1.5	"My daughter, for example, goes to a nearby school (to which all children from the village go), and she has to pay for a vacant seat, on a bus that passes the house. It's completely unacceptable and unjust."	Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.
1.6	"If we get rid of it, we'll be supportive of a gradual process of abolishing it so that pupils who are used to receiving the service don't lose it overnight."	The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.
1.7	"As a parent who lives on the border of the County (in Denbighshire) and has been paying for my children to get a taxi to their school, I'm very disappointed with the decision. Although there is a closer primary school in Denbighshire, the school the children attend is the catchment school for the village and our neighbours (who are on the other side of the border). The village school was closed by the Council so the children of the village now go to the nearest school in Gwynedd."	If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.
1.8	"Many of our children/families have benefited from the vacant seats scheme but have always given up that seat when free travel was necessary for children who are within the allotted distance. So, we don't entirely agree with removing this from the policy."	However, the Council recognises that there are some impacts and barriers involved in ending a scheme. An Equality and Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
1.9	"Very confusing and I don't understand what is demanded by this; children living outside the area should receive the free taxi due to different aspects that met the criteria."	

1.10	"We're paying for the vacant seats scheme. Our home is 2.7 miles from the nearest secondary school, but the road is not suitable for walking every morning and night."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.</p> <p>The Education Department could be contacted to discuss unique circumstances, or to obtain clarity on eligibility for transport.</p> <p>The Council recognises that there are some impacts and barriers involved in ending a scheme. An Equality and Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.11	"Lack of clarity over the change and consideration of how it will affect pupils and families. If a seat is available, then isn't it odd that it can't be used?"	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>
1.12	"It doesn't make sense not to try to fill the vacant seats in the taxi and reduce the need for parents to use vehicles unnecessarily in terms of the impact on the environment."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>

1.13	"Why not fill the vacant seats? This is a stupid change or has something been missed?"	The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.
1.14	"Why unnecessarily promote more use of cars on the road?"	
1.15	"I don't agree with paying for vacant seats, if the bus passes by half empty then it should be filled - I pay for 3 vacant seats here and the bus passes by anyway - it doesn't make sense."	<p>The Council recognises that abolishing the Vacant Seats Scheme as a result of the requirements to consult and publish any change to the provision of education transport before 1 October in the year preceding the change comes into force may result in the possibility of vacant seats on education transport, but the Council will not be able to offer them for a fee to learners who are not eligible for free transport in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.</p> <p>However, the Council recognises that there are some impacts and barriers involved in ending a scheme. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.16	"This can affect rural school numbers especially where parents don't have a car to bring nursery pupils to school."	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about potential impacts on the county's rural school numbers.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>

		<p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.17	<p>"The Education Authority is losing revenue by not letting parents 'buy' vacant seats in buses/taxis.</p> <p>The vacant seats offer can help those without cars who live near the border to avoid paying."</p>	<p>The Council notes the comments.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>In addition, the Council recognises that the end of the Vacant Seats Scheme will result in a slight reduction in revenue income.</p>

		<p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.18	"Didn't know that this was possible anyway."	The Council notes the comment.
1.19	"Why unnecessarily promote more use of cars on the road?"	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>The Council recognises that abolishing the Vacant Seats Scheme could lead to an increase in the number of vehicles transporting learners to school. However, the numbers taking advantage of the Vacant Seats Scheme are not high, so a significant impact on the number of vehicles travelling to school is not foreseen.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport</p>

		Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
1.20	"I don't agree with paying for vacant seats, if the bus passes by half empty then it should be filled - I pay for 3 vacant seats here and the bus passes by anyway - it doesn't make sense."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>The Council recognises that abolishing the Vacant Seats Scheme as a result of the requirements to consult and publish any change to the provision of education transport before 1 October in the year preceding the change comes into force may result in the possibility of vacant seats on education transport, but the Council will not be able to offer them for a fee to learners who are not eligible for free transport in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027. This means families would get 11 months' notice to enable families to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
1.21	"I see no reason to scrap the Vacant Seats Scheme as this is always an ongoing decision and there is no cost to the Council and it does not benefit children who are eligible to	The Council notes the consultee's concerns about potential impacts on the county's rural school numbers.

	<p>travel on a free school bus (as they are always given priority in any way). It supports children who may be outside the selection area (in the case of my family, we are 1.5 km outside the selection area). Of course, it's important to set rules for who can use this and to avoid any misuse – ensuring there is no extra vehicle travel to get to and from near buses for example. But there are families who use this to avoid unnecessary travel into the busy area around the schools in Bangor, and that is the case with my family. At the moment I'm able to drop my daughter off at the bus stop while I drop my son off at his primary school which is right in front of the school and it's a similar arrangement for picking him up - so there is no extra vehicle use and I avoid excessive use of the car within Bangor City. In fact, sometimes we are able to cycle to my child's primary school, weather permitting. I'm also happy to pay the £190 a year for this. I have always understood that this is voluntary – but if there are vacant seats on the bus, the use of these seats is certainly less wasteful and more compatible with the Council's environmental and green transport policies. This reduction in car use is also in line with the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which Cyngor Gwynedd must comply with – it reduces unnecessary car travel, boosts the use of public transport, improves air quality around Bangor's schools. It makes no sense losing this extra income to the Council or reducing green travel options while also worsening air quality, road safety and congestion in Bangor if vacant seats are available, it's important to use them."</p>	<p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>The Vacant Seats Scheme cannot be implemented in its current form, as any change to education transport provision is required to be consulted and published before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force. This means that the Council commits to providing a vacant seat for an extended period, without the flexibility to terminate the arrangement if a situation arises where a vacant seat would no longer be available, resulting in higher costs for the Council.</p> <p>The Council recognises that abolishing the Vacant Seats Scheme as a result of the requirements to consult and publish any change to the provision of education transport before 1 October in the year preceding the change comes into force may result in the possibility of vacant seats on education transport, but the Council will not be able to offer them for a fee to learners who are not eligible for free transport in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>However, the need to consult and publish any change to the provision of education transport before 1 October in the year before the change comes into force means that there will be a possibility of vacant seats on education transport, but the Council will not be able to offer them for a fee to learners who are not eligible for free transport in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>If the decision to abolish the Vacant Seats Scheme was implemented, families would be required to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school from 1 September 2027. This means families would get 11 months' notice to enable families to make alternative arrangements to transport their children to school.</p>
1.22	<p>"The inclusion of a vacant seats scheme is not a concern, as it could further limit learners' access to education, particularly in rural areas. Many learners in Gwynedd are highly dependent on organised transport due to limited</p>	

	<p>public options. Eliminating flexibility in risky transport arrangements, minimal access to favourable or suitable hubs, more complex and longer journeys, can negatively impact attendance, well-being, and consultation.</p> <p>A vacant seats scheme can help to: Use existing capacity effectively Provide practical access for learners who would otherwise have been excluded Support equitable access to education regardless of location</p> <p>Not including such a scheme can unexpectedly limit opportunities, particularly for rural learners and those who need flexibility to access the most suitable provision. The lack of a vacant seats scheme risks reducing accessibility and increasing inequality in access to further education, and should be seen again as part of a more flexible mode of transport."</p>
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An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.

2. FAITH SCHOOLS

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
2.1	"No further than 5 miles makes it very challenging I suppose?"	The Council notes the comment.
2.2	"...Only if it's consistent with all the other schools. Faith should not give advantage or disadvantage."	Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.
2.3	"I don't agree with faith schools in our secular times. Therefore, Catholics should not be treated differently to any other religion or atheist."	It is recognised that faith schools serve a wider area than the usual catchment area of a school, and the provision of transport of up to 5 miles for learners attending faith schools reflects this, compared to
2.4	"If the new policy changes to a minimum of 2 miles and a maximum of 5 miles, then we potentially have 4 children	

	(maybe more) who live in Bethesda and they may not be eligible for this free transport that they currently have. I think we're the closest Catholic School to Bethesda."	the statutory requirements to provide transport of up to 2 miles for primary schools and 3 miles for secondary schools in general.
2.5	"I agree that children should be given free transport to go to a religious school. There are few schools available in Gwynedd that provide a religious school and it is important to keep that alive as what will happen otherwise is that children will lose their faith and religious values. Now, what I don't agree with is that all children should have the right whether they are more than 5 miles away from the religious school closest to them, and maybe the distance to travel for children who live closer should be increased as 2 miles, as people who live in Bangor, for example, they can be seen going to Our Lady's School without the Council providing free buses, but people living in Bethesda, for example, should be allowed to travel further by bus as well."	An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
2.6	"As a Catholic school, Governors and the Diocese would be very concerned about the 5 mile rule as we and Caernarfon are the closest Catholic faith schools in Gwynedd. The next Catholic school is in Llandudno. The 2 mile rule is fair and it currently works. I know that if the taxi was taken away from my child he could not carry on attending his current school as it's too far from me and my work so I could not drop him off and collect him in time resulting in a loss of his faith during the week and the enrichment of my child's faith. I would have to make the choice of moving him to another school or reducing my working hours as a lone parent, relying more on benefits that I don't want to do as I'm currently working full-time to provide for my children; this would put a strain on us financially and put us further in poverty and cause more people to claim more benefits, so ultimately there would be no savings for	

	the government; yes, they will save the taxi payment that is spent but more benefits will need to be claimed."	
2.7	"Learners, especially in rural areas, are very dependent on organised transport; restrictive traffic policies can restrict access to suitable provision, increase the complexity of journeys and negatively impact participation. The provision of free transport during defined distances (2-5 miles) for religious schools is reasonable in principle, as it supports parental and learner choice and helps to ensure equitable access to selected education settings, however, it should be consistently applied alongside wider traffic policies and other learners (e.g. IT learners or those in rural areas who get access to specialist provision) should not be affected. The principle supports equitable access and choice, but it must be balanced to ensure equity across all groups and learner settings."	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about the eligibility of travel to school.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>It is recognised that faith schools serve a wider area than the usual catchment area of a school, and the provision of transport of up to 5 miles for learners attending faith schools reflects this, compared to the statutory requirements to provide transport of up to 2 miles for primary schools and 3 miles for secondary schools in general.</p> <p>Eligibility for transport is considered through a panel for learners accessing specialist provision such as a Special School, ALN Unit, or Referral Unit.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>

3. DUAL RESIDENCES

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
3.1	"There are so many secondary schools further than 5 miles from the school. Also, some learners divide their time quite equally between parents - choosing a main address is unfair."	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about learner patterns and the division of their time between two households.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>
	In addition, the policy would benefit from greater clarity in terms of flexibility and discretionary arrangements and	

	<p>consideration of complex family circumstances (e.g. dual residence). Ensure that initiatives such as independent travel and green travel are appropriately and realistically funded.</p>	<p>It is recognised that the proposal to provide transport of up to 5 miles in dual residence situations reflects the Council's desire to facilitate transport for learners who divide their time between households as the proposal goes beyond the statutory requirements to provide transport for eligible learners of up to 2 miles for primary schools and 3 miles for secondary schools in general.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
3.2	<p>"Again, no excessive advantage should be given to those children/parents over others."</p>	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p>
3.3	<p>"While providing transport from a primary address offers administrative clarity, it does not fully reflect the reality of modern family arrangements. Many families have complex, abnormal living situations, where young people regularly live across two households. This is particularly common in blended parenting arrangements, and both households are an important and prominent part of the learner's life.</p> <p>It can restrict transport to the main address only: Creates practical barriers to attendance on days when the learner is staying at their second home Leads to longer or more complex journeys, especially in rural areas Increases negative impact on attendance, punctuality and well-being Given the importance of ensuring equitable access to education, it is essential that the policy recognises and adapts to these diverse family circumstances.</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about learner patterns and the division of their time between two households.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>It is recognised that the proposal to provide transport of up to 5 miles in dual residence situations reflects the Council's desire to facilitate transport for learners who divide their time between households as the proposal goes beyond the statutory requirements to provide transport for eligible learners of up to 2 miles for primary schools and 3 miles for secondary schools in general.</p> <p>While transport provision can facilitate learners' attendance at school, it is a parent's responsibility to ensure their children's attendance at school.</p>

	<p>In general, while the approach simplifies administration, greater flexibility should be considered to support learners with two residences and to avoid unintended disadvantage."</p>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
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4. POST-16 PROVISION

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
4.1	"Freedom of choice is important for everyone."	<p>The Council notes the consultee's wishes to be able to choose a post-16 course based on subject and location, and the Council is supportive of learners choosing a post-16 course that is suitable for them.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the criteria of the Draft Education Transport Policy note that free transport will be provided to the nearest school or college providing the course, and this is consistent with the criteria for learners of statutory education age.</p> <p>The Welsh Government has the My Travel Pass scheme which facilitates and enables young people aged 16-21 years to travel on several journeys for £1 per day, which could apply to learners who choose an out-of-catchment school or college.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which was part of the consultation documentation on the draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.</p>
4.2	"As not all schools and sites are able to offer courses or subjects it is important to enable pupils to access that course/subject. We need to ensure that these pupils have the same opportunities as everyone else in Wales and beyond."	
4.3	"Distance should not be a barrier to pursuing the student's course of choice."	
4.4	<p>"While the intention to simplify and target transport provision is understood, these suggestions risk creating unexpected barriers for learners. Access to post-16 education should be based not only on proximity, but also on the suitability of the course, the quality of provision, and the individual needs of the learner.</p> <p>A strict approach of "only the nearest provider" does not reflect the reality of travel in rural areas, where journeys can be longer, less direct, and more complex. It can also limit learner choice, limit opportunities for progress, and affect attendance and well-being.</p>	

	To ensure equitable and inclusive access to education, transport policy should retain some flexibility, enabling learners to attend the most suitable provision rather than just being limited to distance."	
4.5	<p>One key concern is the impact on learners aged 19 and over, who would no longer be eligible for supported transport. For many, especially those in rural areas, access to reliable transport is essential to participate in further education. Removing this support risks excluding learners from education, increasing lack of commitment, and negatively impacting future employment opportunities.</p> <p>More broadly, restricting transport to the nearest provider alone does not reflect the reality of travel in Gwynedd. In practice, the nearest provider is not always more accessible or appropriate, and can lead to:</p> <p>Longer and more complex journeys. An increase in trust on a number of transport links. Negative impact on attendance and mental health.</p> <p>There is also a risk that the policy may limit learner choice and access to the most appropriate provision, especially where courses, support, or specialities vary across campuses. Learners in rural communities are likely to be disproportionately affected, as they rely more on organised transport and have fewer alternatives.</p>	

5. ALN AND INDEPENDENT TRAVEL

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
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5.1	<p>"Promoting independence is great but not at the expense of well-being and safety and the new policy should not put undue pressure on young people to travel alone when they are unable to do so safely."</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about safe and independent travel.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which was part of the consultation documentation on the draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.</p>
5.2	<p>"I don't want anyone to use 're-assessment' as an opportunity to end a service for children. I think very strongly that the voices of parents and children should be listened to here."</p>	<p>The Council notes the comment about the importance of listening to the voice of the parent and child.</p> <p>Parents were given the opportunity to respond to the Draft Education Transport Policy by means of an online questionnaire, and a number of consultation sessions were held with children and young people to encourage the child's voice.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which was part of the consultation documentation on the draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.</p>
5.3	<p>"I hope saving money is not at the heart of this. While I would like to see encouragement to travel independently, there should be no enforcement of this – it's a very big step for anyone with ALN."</p>	<p>The Council notes the comments of the consultee.</p> <p>Appropriate training and support will be provided to facilitate and enable suitable learners to travel independently.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which was part of the consultation documentation on the draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.</p>
5.4	<p>"Depending on the child's condition and the risks involved and who will be expected to do this, it's likely to be parents who need to work will have additional pressure on working-class families."</p>	<p>The Council notes the comments.</p>

5.5	<p>"Both approaches are strongly supported as they promote independence, personal development, and better longer-term outcomes for learners. However, this must be supported by proper funding, planning, and specialist support to ensure that it is safe and achievable for all individuals.</p> <p>Independent travel should be offered with support, not an expectation set too quickly. Learners with ALN in particular may need tailored programmes, travel training, and ongoing support to build confidence and ability over time.</p> <p>Without adequate investment, there is a risk that learners can be expected to travel independently before they are ready, which could affect their safety, well-being, and ability to participate in education. Therefore, a balanced approach is essential, one that promotes independence while ensuring learners are fully supported through the process."</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about the costs of safe and independent travel.</p> <p>Appropriate training and support will be provided to facilitate and enable suitable learners to travel independently.</p> <p>Parents were given the opportunity to respond to the Draft Education Transport Policy by means of an online questionnaire, and a number of consultation sessions were held with children and young people to encourage the child's voice.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which was part of the consultation documentation on the draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.</p>
5.6	<p>"Too many of them get a CPD – do all of these need this extra care from the Council?"</p>	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p>

6. ACTIVE TRAVEL

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
6.1	"Very often, it's necessary to transport large equipment and files back and forth, also the North Wales area is very broad and it's not practical in terms of weather and distance to expect people to use a bike/walk. Another point is that public transport is not always reliable."	<p>The Council notes the consultee's comments about the reliability of public transport and concerns about the geographical nature and weather of the rural area.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented, an assessment of the education transport and public transport provision would have to be carried out to ensure that transport timetables are suitable to enable learners to arrive at the location in the morning, and return in the afternoon.</p>
6.2	"A blanket policy should not be adopted. Some roads are unsafe to walk/cycle on."	The Council notes the concerns of the consultee about the safety of some roads in relation to walking and cycling.
6.3	"There is a need to ensure that the roads are safe to enable this; very often, in rural Gwynedd hardly a single car can travel safely, let alone encourage pedestrians and cyclists."	The Council assesses the safety and suitability of travel routes, and if a route is deemed unsuitable for walking to school, then transport will be provided.
6.4	"If you're asking children to walk or cycle a lot of miles in the winter and on unsound sections of the roads, that's not right. Children can get healthy in a lot of other ways and it depends on parents."	
6.5	"Vague"	The Council notes the comment.
6.6	"totally agree with this plan. Too many children are too dependent on cars to come to school instead of walking."	The Council notes the comment.
6.7	"I'm much more interested in transport that is cost-efficient and I've got no interest in sustainable (unless it's the cheapest). The Council is not made of money and should focus on the cheapest way possible rather than meeting fantasy green ideas."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>An Equality and Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the draft</p>

		Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the consultee's comments, the assessment has been updated.
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6. GENERAL COMMENTS

REF.	COMMENTS	THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE
6.1	<p>"No child should travel on public transport for travel to school and home at the end of the day. All children should be able to travel safely without having to stand. No child should have to wait for public transport that does not transport them to/from school. What about having to carry cooking utensils or PE equipment? No family should have to ensure safe transport for their children - what about the impact of this (how many cars have to travel to school instead of one bus - what is the impact of this on our environment) What about families without cars?"</p>	<p>The Council notes the concerns of the consultee about learners travelling by public transport to their educational setting, and on the impacts of this on the environment.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p> <p>Transport is provided either in the form of a public bus, a designated school bus, a taxi or in some cases a travel allowance is offered to parents/guardians to provide the transport.</p> <p>However, the Council recognises that there are some challenges and barriers associated with learners travelling by public transport to access education.</p>
6.2	<p>"Every child should have the right to travel safely to and from school on transport dedicated to school children – no members of the public."</p>	<p>An Equality and Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
6.3	<p>"In rural areas of Gwynedd, public transport is unreliable or not within reasonable distance. Safe transport is paramount to ensure the attendance and punctuality of children and young people in education. The result of children and young people not being able to reach education settings easily is a lack of skills, low levels of</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's comments, and notes the concerns about the reliability of public transport in rural areas.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>

	<p>education, less chance of success in jobs and getting good jobs in the future.</p> <p>One must be aware that some parents, especially in underprivileged areas, are unable to drive themselves and immediately put their children at a disadvantage, if the travel arrangements are not available."</p>	<p>Every effort is made to try to provide suitable education transport, with dedicated links to access a variety of sites.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
6.4	<p>"All learners should have free transport to the educational facility of their choice. If Cyngor Gwynedd wants young people to continue in education then they need to support those learners to get to the facilities considering that many learners live in rural communities and cannot fund transport themselves."</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's comments and notes the concerns about the reliability of public transport in rural areas.</p> <p>Where learners are eligible for free transport, transport will be provided in accordance with the relevant criteria.</p>
6.5	<p>"The government wants parents to work and provide for their family while trying to raise a family; parents cannot work and take children back and forth as some jobs do not include these family hours and the lack of public transport in rural areas makes it impossible for children to complete these courses or attend school. If their services were removed, that would increase the number of parents on benefits as they want to put their children first and would affect single parents who want to work and contribute to the world's income. As a single parent, I couldn't continue to work as much without the taxi, which would result in me reducing my working hours and relying further on benefits, which is not something I wish but I would have no choice."</p>	<p>Every effort is made to try to provide suitable education transport, with dedicated links to access a variety of sites.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
6.6	<p>"Transporting children to schools is expensive. Could school catchments be re-examined every 5 years and see if it is possible to change funding by changing catchment boundaries e.g. if there was a new housing estate - this would make this beneficial."</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's concerns about transport costs and reviewing school catchment boundaries.</p> <p>The Council notes the comment about the link between school catchment arrangements and the School Admissions Code, suggesting that a more dynamic approach to planning education provision is</p>

		<p>needed. Specifically, the response notes that reviewing catchment area boundaries regularly (e.g. every 5 years) in response to demographic changes such as new housing developments could help to ensure that school capacity and transport costs are managed more effectively.</p> <p>In terms of the School Admissions Code, this raises considerations about fairness and reasonable access to local schools, as catchment boundaries can influence who has priority access to school places</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
6.7	"Such schools should be provided no matter how far the distance is over 5 miles if a child has to travel more due to the lack of these schools. If not, children will miss out or they should provide these types of schools in each area to prevent children from failing to get the right support, so more schools should be provided then."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p>
6.8	"Make sure the Council is in line with the Well-being and Future Generations Act at all times."	<p>The Council notes the comment.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
6.9	"We recognise that Cyngor Gwynedd will need to review its Education Transport Policy to ensure that it remains efficient and sustainable. However, the proposed changes raise a	<p>The Council notes the concerns of the consultee about some of the changes in question in the Draft Education Transport Policy.</p>

	number of significant concerns about access, average, and learner participation.	An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
6.10	To summarise, while the intention to create a more efficient and targeted transport system is understood, the proposals risk creating barriers to education, reducing choice, and putting rural and vulnerable learners at a disadvantage. A more flexible and inclusive approach is needed to ensure that everyone can have realistic access to appropriate post-16 education."	

THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

7. In your opinion, what effects would this policy have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English?

Comments	The Council's Response
"Schools in Wales should by all means encourage children to speak Welsh it is only natural, but I would also encourage children to learn how to read and write in English as well."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee.
"It's unlikely to make much of a difference."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee.
"Transport has no effect on language."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee.
"You would be taking away transport facilities of both English speaking and Welsh speaking students. Neither would be discriminated against in this new policy as ALL learners would be discriminated against."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy.

	Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
"The Welsh language should not be an issue in that regard if every school implements a robust language policy."	
"No significant impact either way."	
"It would have a massive impact."	
"I am sick to death of Welsh language bully ideas. Schools should be about giving the students the best preparation possible for the modern world and that is education in English. English is a world language. Welsh is a ghetto language that restricts involvement in the real world."	
"While the policy is not intended to disadvantage the Welsh language, it may do so in practice unless sufficient flexibility is built in. It is important that transport arrangements continue to support equal access to Welsh-medium education and do not unintentionally treat the Welsh language less favourably than."	

8. In your opinion, how would it be possible to draw up or adapt the policy to ensure that it has positive impacts, or more positive impacts on opportunities for people to use Welsh, and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

Comments	The Council's Response
"Use a method that helps schools to understand that all pupils may not be able to speak Welsh depending on the pupils' background attending the schools."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport
"It can't..."	

	Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
“Transporting students to an educational facility is going to have zero impact on the Welsh language.”	
“Where parents want to choose a faith school, this will be of more significance to them rather than the language.”	
“By making sure the Welsh Government keep up to date with the English.”	
“I am sick to death of Welsh language bully ideas. Schools should be about giving the students the best preparation possible for the modern world and that is education in English. English is a world language. Welsh is a ghetto language that restricts involvement in the real world.”	
“A more flexible approach that takes account of language preference as well as proximity will help ensure that learners can access Welsh-medium education and that the Welsh language is actively supported rather than inadvertently disadvantaged.”	

9. In your opinion, would it be possible to draw up or adapt the policy to ensure that it does not have detrimental impacts, or have less detrimental impacts on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English?

Comments	The Council's Response
"No comment - I don't see what impact ensuring safe and suitable transport for pupils in education in Gwynedd has on the Welsh language."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee.

<p>“It would have a massive detrimental effect on ALL students having access to further education putting an already poorly funded education system decades behind it's fellow contemporaries in other UK countries.”</p>	
<p>"Ensure that all taxi drivers speak Welsh with the passengers."</p>	<p>The Council notes the consultee's comments regarding the language skills of education transport drivers.</p>
<p>“I am sick to death of Welsh language bully ideas. Schools should be about giving the students the best preparation possible for the modern world and that is education in English. English is a world language. Welsh is a ghetto language that restricts involvement in the real world.”</p>	<p>The Council notes the comments of the consultee.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.</p>
<p>“Yes, it would be possible to formulate or adapt the policy to reduce or avoid adverse effects on the Welsh language.</p> <p>This could be achieved by introducing greater flexibility within the policy, ensuring that language preference is considered alongside distance when determining transport eligibility. In particular, learners should be able to access Welsh-medium or bilingual provision, even where this is not available at the nearest provider.</p> <p>The policy could also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include clear discretionary arrangements to support access to Welsh-medium education Recognise the importance of continuity in Welsh-language learning and peer groups Take into account the realities of rural travel, where accessing Welsh-medium provision may require travelling further 	

Without these considerations, there is a risk that a strict “nearest provider only” approach could unintentionally disadvantage Welsh compared to English.”	
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10. What do you think would be the impact of this policy on people facing socio-economic disadvantage? Socio-economic disadvantage means poverty of all kinds – financial poverty, digital poverty, living far from services etc.

Comments	The Council's Response
“Updating policies and providing help needs to be acknowledged to help everyone understand if anyone is struggling.”	The Council notes the comments of the consultee. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken, which formed part of the consultation documentation on the Draft Education Transport Policy. Following consideration of the comments received, the assessment has been updated.
"Reducing transport for pupils who are in education in Gwynedd definitely puts a financial strain on our society regardless of their backgrounds."	
"Not providing transport would affect the learners who do not have access to a car at home, putting them at a disadvantage taking their education into account."	
“Those who would not be able to self-fund would not be able to attend educational facilities meaning less opportunities for those individuals. This would be very discriminatory to poorer students.”	
"Some families would not be able to afford to send pupils to school and therefore this would affect the education of the pupils."	
"It depends on the ability of these families to afford to pay – and, is there support available for those who are really unable to pay?"	
“Those children attending from Bethesda would be at a disadvantage and cause financial challenges for families.”	
“It would definitely impact me as a single parent working full-time, I would have to decrease my working hours and rely on	

<p>benefits more, causing more poverty to myself and the government.”</p>	
<p>“The proposed policy is likely to have a disproportionate negative impact on people facing socio-economic disadvantage, particularly those living in rural communities.</p> <p>Learners experiencing financial hardship are more reliant on free or supported transport to access education. Restricting transport to the nearest provider, or removing eligibility (e.g. for those aged 19+), may:</p> <p>Increase out-of-pocket travel costs. Limit access to suitable courses or campuses. Create additional barriers for those already facing financial pressure. For learners in rural areas, where public transport is limited, the impact is greater. They may face: Longer, more complex journeys. Increased travel costs where free transport is not available. Reduced ability to participate fully in education.</p> <p>This could lead to:</p> <p>Lower attendance and engagement. Reduced progression opportunities. Increased risk of learners becoming disengaged from education or training.</p> <p>Overall, the policy risks widening existing inequalities, particularly for those experiencing financial hardship or geographic disadvantage. Without sufficient flexibility and support, it may create additional barriers to accessing education for the most vulnerable learners.”</p>	

"Not much."	The Council notes the comments of the consultee.
"No big impact."	
"No idea and I doubt many would. Try and focus on the main issue which is how this policy will work for the vast majority."	