



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE
RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR



Service Change Consultation **HAVE YOUR SAY!**

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSED NEW POLICY

The **Consultation starts** on: **2 JUNE 2015**
and will **close at 5pm** on: **28 JULY 2015**

Local Engagement Events will be held in the community.
Details will be placed on the website when confirmed.

For further information please visit:
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/budgetchallenge
where you can find out the detail of the proposals and fill in a survey.

If you require a hard copy of the questionnaire please get in touch via:

☎ 01443 425014

✉ HTSconsultation@rctcbc.gov.uk

✉ FREEPOST RSBU-HJUK-LSSS,
Research & Consultation, The Pavilions,
Clydach Vale, CF40 2XX

2015

Available in alternative languages or formats on request.
Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

All councils in Wales continue to be affected by significant reductions to their funding as a result of the austerity measures put in place by the UK Government.

Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC is facing an estimated shortfall in resources (budget gap) of £42.3M up to 2017/18, with a gap of £23.7M for 2016/17.

To deal with this budget gap the Council is reviewing all services and considering options to reduce expenditure and / or increase income by reconfiguring, cutting or reducing the services we provide.

An important part of the process is to gauge the views of our residents, staff and key stakeholders on our proposals.

Please take this opportunity to have your say.

Home to School Transport

Background

The Council currently provides Home to School Transport for approximately 11,690 mainstream pupils each day through the provision of more than 230 routes and the issuing of public transport season tickets. Approximately 7,000 learners are transported on a discretionary basis i.e. the Council is not legally required to provide transport for these learners but under its current policy it has chosen to do so. In addition the service provides transport for approximately 1,000 Special Educational Need ('SEN') pupils daily.

The Home to School Transport budget for 2015/16 is £11.4M.

The Council must provide free Home to School Transport for all statutory school age learners who live more than 2 miles from their nearest suitable primary school. We currently provide transport if you live more than 1.5 miles away. Therefore what we provide between 1.5 and 2 miles is discretionary.

For secondary school learners (up to the age of 16 – end of year 11) we must provide free transport if you live more than 3 miles from your nearest suitable secondary school. We currently provide transport to learners who live more than 2 miles away. Therefore what we provide between 2 and 3 miles is discretionary.

The Council must promote access to Welsh Medium Education and in doing so, it allows learners to select their nearest suitable school, in accordance with their choice of English or Welsh Medium Language.

For pupils attending Faith Schools we do not have to provide transport at all (unless it is your nearest suitable school and you live more than 2 miles (primary) or 3 miles (secondary) away). We currently provide free transport to all learners who live more than 1.5 miles away (primary) or 2 miles away (secondary). Therefore if the school is not the nearest suitable school, transport to Faith Schools is discretionary.

For pre-compulsory school age children we do not have to provide transport at all. We currently provide free transport for full-time pupils if you live more than 1.5 miles away from your school. Therefore all transport is discretionary.

For post 16 learners (6th form or college) we do not have to provide transport at all. We currently provide free transport if you live more than 2 miles away from your school / college. Therefore all transport is discretionary.

Proposal

It is proposed to maintain the current level of transport but to introduce a charge for those learners who benefit from the discretionary elements of the provision, as set out above.

It is proposed that the charge would be £1.75 per day, which has been determined by taking into account :-

- The cost of the alternative, available, public transport service.
- The cost of transporting pupils by car.
- The ongoing provision of a subsidy to provide the service.

It is proposed that for those pupils in receipt of Free School Meals, the level of the charge would be reduced to £1.00 per day.

It is also proposed that for families with more than 2 children who would be subject to paying the proposed charge, then they would pay for a maximum of 2 children only.

The proposed new policy would be implemented from the start of the 2016/17 academic year (that is, from September 2016).

The proposed preferred option would deliver full year savings (generate income) to the Council of £2.048M (£1.280M part-year effect in 2016/17).

What does this mean for me?

Your School	Where you live	What it means for you
English or Welsh Primary School (including Nursery)	Living more than 2 miles away	Continue to receive free transport
	Living between 1.5 miles and 2 miles away	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
English or Welsh Secondary School	Living more than 3 miles away	Continue to receive free transport
	Living between 2 miles and 3 miles away	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
Faith School – Primary (including Nursery)	Living more than 1.5 miles away and where there is an alternative school nearer	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
	Living more than 2 miles away where the faith school is your nearest suitable school	Continue to receive free transport
	Living between 1.5 miles and 2 miles away where the faith school is your nearest suitable school	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
Faith School - Secondary	Living more than 2 miles away and where there is an alternative school nearer	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
	Living more than 3 miles away where the faith school is your nearest suitable school	Continue to receive free transport
	Living between 2 miles and 3 miles away where the faith school is your nearest suitable school	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day
Post 16 Learners	Living more than 2 miles away	Continue to receive subsidised transport but at a charge of £1.75 per day

Note:

Transport entitlement for pupils attending Middle Schools, (schools with pupils of both Primary and Secondary age), will be in accordance with their primary/secondary school age as detailed in the table above.

The Council considers the term 'suitable school' applies to the catchment area for English, Welsh or dual language mainstream school or special school/class as appropriate.

If you attend on a part time basis then transport would only be provided at the start and end of the normal school day and not at lunchtimes.

Whilst pupils with statements of SEN are assessed by distance criteria, in practice SEN pupils would not be affected by this proposed policy change as their transport is based upon their individual need. The discretionary elements of SEN transport (pre school, post 16, etc.) would continue as an entirely subsidised, non-charged service.

Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail school reorganisation proposals

On the 19th May 2015 the Council's Cabinet agreed to progress the proposals to reorganise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail areas to the next stage of the review process by issuing appropriate statutory notices. The proposals are to:

- Close the sixth forms of Ferndale Community School, Porth County Community School and Tonypandy Community College and transfer the sixth form provision to Treorchy Comprehensive School and a new 3-19 school in Tonyrefail;
- Close Porth County Community School, Llwynceilyn Infants' School, Porth Infants' School, and Porth Junior School and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Porth County Community School;
- Increase the capacity of Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Llwynceilyn by approximately 100 places, utilising the site of the existing Llwynceilyn Infants' School;
- Close Tonypandy Community College, Penygraig Infants' School, Penygraig Junior School, Tonypandy Primary School and Ysgol Yr Eos Primary School and create a new 3-16 middle school on the site of the current Tonypandy Community College. Relocate the specialist primary pupil referral provision at the Tai Centre, Penygraig to the site of the existing Ysgol Yr Eos Primary School;
- Close Tonyrefail Comprehensive School and Tonyrefail Primary School and create a new 3-19 middle school on the site of the existing Tonyrefail Comprehensive School. Relocate Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail to the current Tonyrefail Primary School;
- Change the catchment area of Treorchy Comprehensive School, Ferndale Community School, and set new catchment areas for the new middle schools for Porth, Tonypandy and Tonyrefail;

- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Ysgol Yr Eos, and the three Learning Support Classes at Porth County Community School to the new 3-16 school at Porth, to create specialist provision for the four key stages;
- Transfer the Learning Support Class at Tonyrefail Comprehensive School to the new 3-19 school for Tonyrefail.

The period for objecting to the above proposals to reorganise Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and Sixth Form provision in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail areas, closes on 2nd July 2015, i.e. earlier than this consultation on a proposed new Home to School Transport Policy which closes on 28th July 2015. Objections to the school reorganisation proposals should be sent to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, School Planning Section, Ty Trevithick, Abercynon, Mountain Ash CF45 4UQ, e-mail: schoolplanning@rctednet.net

Further information in respect of these changes can be found at:
www.rctcbc.gov.uk/schoolconsultation

If you consider that these proposals, should they be implemented, would alter or affect your response in relation to this consultation on a proposed new Home to School Transport policy we would like to hear how and why as part of any response you may submit.

Home to School Transport Policy - Alternative Options

As part of developing a preferred option for consultation, a number of alternative options have been considered and commentary on these alternatives is provided below. The Council invites you to submit your views on these alternative options in addition to any comments you may have on the preferred option above.

Option A - Status Quo i.e. Retain the current level of provision – savings £nil.
Not proposed because the costs of the current discretionary provision are considered to be unaffordable.

Option B - Provide primary school transport above statutory distance only (more than 2 miles) – savings £0.2m.

Option C - Provide secondary school and college transport above statutory distance only (more than 3 miles) – savings £0.8m.

Options B & C are not proposed as they would result in the complete removal of

transport provision for 2,975 pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance.

If these options were introduced it is likely pupils who already have a discretionary transport entitlement would continue to receive it until they complete the phase of education they are in. Therefore full savings would not be achievable for at least six years.

Option D - Removal of all pre-compulsory school age transport – savings £nil.

This option is not proposed as it would not result in any savings due to the small number of pupils travelling (560 pupils on 66 individual routes) and the current capacity available on school transport running at the start and end of the school day.

Option E - Removal of all post-16 transport – savings £0.8m.

This option is not proposed as it would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 3,089 pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct public transport routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could discourage pupils from continuing education in sixth-forms or colleges.

Option F - Removal of all transport to primary Voluntary Aided (Faith) schools (where not closest suitable school) – savings £0.4m.

Option G - Removal of all transport to secondary Voluntary Aided (Faith) schools (where not closest suitable school) – savings £0.7m.

Options F & G are not proposed as they would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 1,635 pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct public transport routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance. If these options were introduced it is likely pupils who already have a transport entitlement would continue to receive it until they complete the phase of education they are in. Therefore full savings would not be achievable for at least six years.

Option H - Removal of all transport to primary Welsh schools (where not closest suitable school) – savings £0.8m.

Option I - Removal of all transport to secondary Welsh schools (where not closest suitable school) – savings £1.0m.

Options H & I are not proposed as they would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 3,614 pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct public transport routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance.

There is a risk of not meeting the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education.

If these options were introduced it is likely pupils who already have a discretionary transport entitlement would continue to receive it until they complete the phase of education they are in. Therefore full savings would not be achievable for at least six years.

Option J - Removal of all discretionary provision – savings £4.2m.

This option is not proposed as it would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 9,604 pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct public transport routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance.

There is a risk of not meeting the requirements of the Learner Travel (Wales) measure 2008 in relation to promotion of access to Welsh medium education.

If these options were introduced it is likely pupils who already have a discretionary transport entitlement would continue to receive it until they complete the phase of education they are in. Therefore full savings would not be achievable for at least six years.

Option K - Removal of all discretionary provision except to Welsh schools – savings £2.6m.

This option is not proposed as it would result in the complete removal of transport provision for 7,141 pupils. Some journeys will not be on direct public transport routes, reducing the number of alternative travel options for pupils. This could have a negative impact on school attendance.

If this option was introduced it is likely pupils who already have a transport entitlement would continue to receive it until they complete the phase of education they are in. Therefore full savings would not be achievable for at least six years.

Home to School Transport - What you need to know

What do you mean by nearest suitable school?

As defined by the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008, the nearest “suitable school” is the school where the education or training provided is suitable having regard for the age, ability and aptitudes of the learner and any learning difficulties he or she may have.

How much will the charge be for discretionary transport?

The proposed charge is £1.75 a day with the Council covering the remaining subsidy, (or £1 a day for pupils in receipt of free school meals).

Do I have to pay if I/my child receive(s) discretionary transport?

If you/your child would like to continue to access Home to School Transport then, yes you would have to contribute towards the cost of this journey. Otherwise you would have to make alternative arrangements to transport yourself/your child to and from school.

Would I/my child have to pay each day?

The proposal suggests payment would be made monthly, termly or annually but would not be paid on the day on the bus or through the school.

How can I check whether I/my child will be directly affected by the introduction of a charge?

It may be the case that in accordance with existing policy a child is currently (or due to be) entitled to free Home to School Transport but parents/carers/pupils are not aware if that is as a consequence of living in the discretionary distance area which the Council currently provides free provision for (i.e. between 1.5 and 2 miles from a primary school and between 2 and 3 miles from a secondary school).

Maps showing the discretionary and statutory transport distances for each school are available on the budget challenge website

(www.rctcbc.gov.uk/budgetchallenge). Please note, these maps are provided as a guide only and do not guarantee entitlement or otherwise.

I have/my child has an SEN statement of needs, will I/they be affected?

No, Home to School Transport arrangements for SEN pupils would not be affected by these proposals.

I am/my child is not currently eligible for Home to School Transport but this year I have been able to purchase a spare seat for travel on the bus. Would this proposal affect me/my child?

Yes, the charge for a spare seat for non-eligible pupils would rise in line with the proposed charge of £1.75 a day. There are no other changes to these arrangements, and as is currently the case spare seats cannot be guaranteed from year to year and this provision is subject to availability.

I live/my child lives within 2 miles of their nearest primary school or 3 miles of the nearest secondary school but the walking route is not safe, would transport be provided free of charge in this situation?

If the walking route to school is considered to be “available” (i.e. safe as far as is reasonably practicable) free Home to School Transport would not be provided. However, if the route is considered to be “not available” (i.e. not safe as far as is reasonably practicable) and there is not an alternative “available” walking route, you/your child would be eligible for free Home to School Transport. If you/your child currently receives free Home to School Transport because the walking route is “not available” then you/your child would continue to receive free transport. Such routes are subject to re-assessment to confirm if they continue to be “not available” (for example following improvement works).

What if I/my child lives over 2 miles (Primary) or over 3 miles (Secondary) from the nearest suitable school?

Entitlement to free Home to School Transport would remain under the proposed new policy.

I/My child is in receipt of free school meals – would I have to register separately to benefit from the reduced level of charge?

An application would need to be made for all pupils wishing to travel on discretionary Home to School Transport. Details of how this can be done will be confirmed should any changes to Home to School Transport be implemented.

How can I check if I/my child is entitled to Free School Meals?

Details of Free School Meals entitlement and an online application form are available on the RCT website on the link below, or by calling **01443 425002**.

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

Can I book transport on a term by term basis, for example in the summer term I/my child may be able to walk to school?

No, In order for the Council to effectively plan its Home to School Transport provision it would not be possible to purchase a seat on an individual term by term basis. Where you/your child does not need to travel for the full school year alternative public transport routes may be a more cost effective option.

What if I/my child is due to sit exams or finish school before the normal end of the academic year (end of summer term)?

In order for the Council to effectively plan its Home to School Transport provision it would not be possible to purchase a seat for individual terms. Where you/your child does not need to travel for the full school year alternative public transport routes may be a more cost effective option.

When is this proposal likely to begin to impact on me?

If approved, the revised policy would be published by the 1st October 2015 and would be effective for all pupils from the 1st September 2016.

What do I need to do now?

The Council is asking all pupils, parents/carers, residents, staff and other key stakeholders to give their views on the proposal. Please take this opportunity to have your say. The questionnaire and full report considered by the Council's Cabinet is available from the following link:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/budgetchallenge