



Enterprise and Learning Committee

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Response to the consultation on the proposed Learner Travel (Wales) Measure

The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) represents Local Authority Officers dealing with the promotion and procurement of public transport, the co-ordination of all modes of travel including school transport, social service and health transport and the development of sustainable forms of travel. Please find below the invited response to the consultation on the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure from ATCO.

1. Do you agree that local authorities should be central to the assessment of the travel needs of children and young people in education and training?

ATCO agrees that the local authorities have a central role to play in the travel needs of children and young people in education and training. However, it is fair to note that this is a partnership process with all educational establishments and other related partners which includes the parents and pupils as well. There is also a significant need to ensure that any policy and/or legal framework should be uniform throughout Wales.

2. Do you agree that the Measure should put in place the same legal framework across Wales or should local authorities have full discretion to propose their own arrangements?

ATCO promotes the requirement for uniform framework throughout Wales, it is also important to recognise the individual services provided by each of the individual authorities.

3 Within the broad legal framework, do you agree that local authorities should have some discretion to provide more generous transport arrangements than required by the Measure if they judge that worthwhile? (For instance, transport over shorter distances, or to Welsh medium or denominational schools that are further away.)

ATCO agrees that the local authorities should have discretion to provide transport in accordance to agreed policies. It is important that the choice to educate children through language and denominational education continues to exist; however consideration should be given to the clarity of distance in relation to the English language "catchment" school. This demonstrates the need to consider guidance for the appropriate policy.

4. Do you support using the concept of the age of a learner and the distance from home to the nearest suitable school to determine eligibility for free transport?

ATCO recognises this type of criteria requires greater clarity, for both mainstream and the pupil requiring special educational transport. Significantly if there has been an increase in the eligible distance to schools it has been also acknowledged that there has been a significant increase in the volume of parental traffic transporting learners to educational establishments, this in itself has in adverse affect on the congestion and environmental issues.

5. Do you agree that a common distance limit should apply to all primary school children in place of the current legal distinction made at age eight?

ATCO as indicated in previous points recommends a uniformed approach to policy in accordance with the appropriately agreed National guidelines.

6. Do you think that the duties in the draft Measure for local authorities to work collaboratively with each other and governing bodies and other education providers, and the duty for governing bodies to work collaboratively with local authorities, are appropriate and effective?

ATCO supports cohesive working between local authorities and as part of the organisations strategy adopts good practice working between partners and positively encourages such partnerships to promote Safe and efficient transport.

7. Do you have comments on the duty on local authorities and Welsh Ministers to promote environmental

sustainability when assessing travel needs and making travel arrangements?

ATCO agrees that it is important to facilitate the appropriate level between environmental sustainability and travel requirements and the appropriate consideration is given to assessing all forms of transport when taking into consideration the environmental impact in transporting students.

8. Do you agree that local authorities should have the power to change school session times in order to make transport arrangements more effective, efficient, or environmentally sustainable?

ATCO recognises that such a change in session time could have a significant impact of the school day, notwithstanding the parents who may have children in both primary and secondary school. Therefore the variance on the school times will potentially demonstrate efficiency savings and possibly contribute to the sustainability of the environment, however, local authorities will work with the educational establishments to co-ordinate the changes in times possibly up to 30 minutes either end of the academic day, further consultation in relation to the local authorities will need to be clearly agreed.

9. Do you agree that local authorities should be under a duty to publish a code of conduct, informed by consultation with stakeholders, which sets standards for behaviour on school buses?

ATCO has recognised the issues relating to the poor behaviour by pupils and has produced a safety video relating to the subject on a national basis, so therefore as an organisation would strongly agree with the need to produce a code of conduct or all those who use the school bus transport. ATCO again endorses the need for a uniformed approach on a national level for such an initiative.

10. Do you agree that head teachers should apply sanctions for breaches of the code of conduct as part of a school's behaviour policy?

ATCO acknowledge the transportation of the students on the school run should not be compromised, however it is also acknowledged that a local authority should be allowed discretion relating to a code of conduct. There are specific issues that may have led to poor behaviour on vehicles and the school are in the appropriate place to assist with the understanding and investigation of these incidents to advise on the appropriate sanction relating to the overall assessment of the policy. The success of such a measure will be required to the part of the partnership agreement between the local authority, which includes the school, the parents and the pupils. Contractual arrangements for home to school transport are between the operator and the Local Authority, should ensure that the local authority has a responsibility towards the final agreement on any disciplinary action and all parties will agreed and abide by the agreed code of conduct.

11. Do you have any further comments?

ATCO welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation relating to Learner travel and supports the efforts to improve the service to all participants involved. There are however, significant implications for local authorities in relation to resources and the co-ordination of school transport with other modes of travel. It is noted however, that the "Parental perception" of school travel has changed in relation to the personal safety of their children being transported within the Home to School transport service, such changes or improvements are looked at as needing to be innovative approaches to the transport provision and will need to be considered in order to meet the aspirations of the service. Any new school transport schemes should consider the needs of all pupils, including the emphasis on the safety aspects in the operation of school transport; however any shift or change in the legislation is best consolidated through the issuing of national best practice guidelines for Wales. Yours sincerely

On behalf of ATCO Education Special Interest Group